The influence of environment on the fen children of Holland (Lincs.)

Hinchley, A.

THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT ON THE FEN CHILDREN OF HOLLAND (LINCS.)

A thesis submitted by
A.Hinchley, M.A.,
for the degree of Master of Education,
in February, 1939

C O N T E N T S

I.

HISTORICAL AND GENERAL BACKGROUND

"The history of the Fens is lost in antiquity." Such is the dictum of one writer, and truly the ancestry of the Fen dwellers of to-day has been for long a rich subject of controversy. Certain it is, however, that there were settlers long before the Christian era opened. They came, these hardy pioneers, from the coasts of Holland and Belgium, to a land barren and bleak, swept by cold, icy winds and in parts, covered by the invading waters of the sea. The tribe who braved the rigours of this inhospitable country was the Iceni; they lived a very simple and primitive existence, living on simple food and leading, like their later descendants, an almost amphibious life, wading and skulling their frail boats from one island to another.

Such were the people who fell a prey to the Roman invasions. The Romans attempted to civilize the natives and improve their conditions of life. In particular, they planned to drain off the waste waters of the Fenland and devote the regained land to profitable agricultural production. This scheme, nevertheless, was fiercely resisted by the originals who had no wish to change their

mode of existence and gave evidence of that stubbornness and opposition to change which became the Fenman's characteristics.

But not many years had elapsed before the Fens once more came under the conqueror's heel — on this occasion the sturdy Saxons under their leader Cedric. Before long, all traces of the Britons had vanished and to-day, with the exception of Lincoln, Bardney, and Kirton, no other place-names bear any indication of British origin. Indeed, it is generally assumed that the Fens to-day are more purely Saxon than any other part of England.

One hundred years (450 - 550) passed between the first coming of the Anglo-Saxons and the time when they at last settled down and became more of an entity. Yet even so, there were still "divisions" separated by the more difficult obstacles such as fen or forest. The figures of the Tribal Hidage, corroborated by the map of the Domesday vills, indicate that the paucity of the Fen, together with its isolation, led agriculturally to its neglect. Further, the wild and inhospitable nature of this region rendered it a complete natural barrier. It was a no-man's land of the time and as such it tended to preserve peace between the States on its borders.

No doubt, too, its function in this direction rendered its isolation even more complete. Mathew Paris wrote of the Fens[1]: "They were accessible neither for man nor beast, affording only deep mud."

The physical dangers of bog and marsh were reinforced by those of a more ephemeral, yet more terrifying kind. The simple Saxon mind filled the Fens with a multitude of demons all anxious to seize and destroy the stray wanderer. The fantastic stories attributed to St.Botolph give some idea of the magnitude of this fear and superstitution, and indicate what the barrier of the Fens meant to the people of that age. There is no doubt, too, that the Fenland was "full of dark mystery". Its unhealthiness is attested by many; a pestilential place "oftimes clouded with dark vapours". Ague and malaria were, needless to say, very common afflictions.

Thus the Fenland, by its very condition, became a natural frontier zone, and yet the very reasons which caused the majority of men to shun and fear its strange mystery attracted the minority who, for some reason or other, had cause to distrust the more inhabited areas. The Fens

---

1. The Fenland Frontier in Anglo-Saxon England, by H. C. Darby. Lincolnshire Notes and Queries, Vol.II, 1890-1.

accordingly became a refuge and a retreat for all sorts and conditions of men - the law-breaker, the exile, and the conquered. Beddoe[1] concludes that "there is some ground for suspecting that a Welsh or aboriginal population lingered longer in the Fens than in the east of England generally."

But the Fenland is a region into which people have migrated continuously. In 870, a body of Danes invaded the Fens. Exactly to what extent they settled there is a matter of some controversy. Dr.Beddoe affirms that Lincolnshire is an Anglo-Danish county, and there are certainly many examples of the fair-haired, blue-eyed Danish type. But a study of Scandinavian invasions gives us rather the impression of small bands of buccaneers than of important national migrations.

In later years, William the Conqueror found the Fen dwellers worthy foemen, to whose daring and stout resistance he continually paid tribute. They were the last of the English to bow to the proud Norman yoke and eventually, "instead of the Fenmen becoming Normans in manner and language, the Normans gradually became converted into Fenmen"[2] From

---

1. Quoted in The Fenland Frontier in Anglo-Saxon England, by H. C. Darby.

2. Lincolnshire Fens and Fen-dwellers, by John Hackford, (Lincoln Public Library).

this time, the Fen people ceased to be troubled by the invader and cut off, as they were, from the inhabited world, they endeavoured to drag out of the land a precarious living as fishers and fowlers.

"An humble race of men,
Alike amphibious by kind nature's hand
Formed to exist on water or on land.
Who endured long time
The various hardships of the watery clime,
Where slaughtering gun and faithful dog had fed
His wife and little family with bread."

These conditions naturally bred a hard, sturdy, fiercely independent race of men, and as time went on a three-fold type of settlement was evolved - marshes, fens, and the town lands which were the higher and drier parts, and which eventually became the sites of villages and the centres of arable farming. But the constant flooding made the land practically useless for agriculture and it was not until 1626 that Cornelius Vermuyden, the Dutchman, began a scheme of drainage.

The Fenmen offered a long and bitter resistance to the drainage schemes, which they considered would rob them of their livelihood. In the petition of the inhabitants of the Soke of Bolingbroke, we can picture the fierce struggle of the Fen dwellers against what they considered an outrageous

act of injustice, and an attempt by the rich and those in authority to rob them of rights and possessions, paltry in themselves, yet which were their very means of subsistence. After claiming that the Fen supplied them with fish and with thatch, the petition continues: "Many of us, by the blessing of God and our own industry, have procured a cow or two which we used to graze in the same Fen in the summer, and get fodder for their support in the winter, but alas, of these privileges we are in a great measure depressed by a set of men called Commissioners who hath imbibed such a range of drainage that exceeds both utility and justice."[1]

When times were settled, the work of drainage went on, and by 1808, 2,000,000 acres of fen land had been reclaimed, and towards the end of the eighteenth century most of this land was enclosed in spite of tremendous opposition from the Fenmen. Holland, which occupies the N.E., one-third of the Fenland, probably benefited from the Drainage and Enclosure schemes more than any other area. Most of it was converted from a vast swamp into some of the best land in the country.

Some interesting facts concerning the people of Holland towards the end of the nineteenth century were obtained by

---

1. Lincolnshire Fens and Fen-dwellers, p.4.

the writer during a conversation with an old Fen-dweller. She describes the people she knew as an industrious, thrifty population. In winter, utter isolation cut off the inhabitants of the village and the small-holders from the neighbouring towns. A visit to the town was an event in itself, and the pedlar, with the smaller necessities of life, was the news-vendor. "Strangers from other counties were called foreigners and distrusted, as were the animals they sometimes brought to market. The old Fenmen were clothed in the skins of their own animals - they loved their independence and were a strong, sturdy race."

To-day, intensive small-scale arable farming dominates the economic life of Holland. Out of a population of 95,490, 59,010 live in rural areas, the majority of whom are engaged in agricultural work. The following figures[1] show their distribution:-

Regular Workers	
Males, 21 years old and over	7,980
Males, under 21 years old	1,760
Women and girls	2,130
Casual Workers	
Males, 21 years old and over	1,090
Males, under 21 years old	180
Women and girls	1,660
Total employed ...	14,800

1. Supplied by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Number of Smallholders

Above 1 and not exceeding 5 acres	1,278
" 5 " " " 20 "	1,429
" 20 " " " 50 "	1,261

Number of farms between 1 acre and 1000 acres in extent, 5,054.

The number of those directly engaged in agricultural occupations is thus seen to be 20,769[1], and this high proportion of the total occupied population illustrates the overwhelming importance of agriculture in Holland.

The soil itself is among the most fertile in the British Isles, as a study of the table set out below fully reveals.

Table[2] showing the average yield per acre of certain crops in Holland.

Crop	Average for 1927-1936 Cwts.	Position among counties of England and Wales.
Wheat	22.9	1
Barley	20.7	1
Oats	24.6	1
Mixed Corn	18.6	2
Potatoes	7.5 (tons)	2

1. Actually a little less, as some farmers own more than one farm.

2. Agricultural Statistics, 1937, Part I., Table 19.

This fertility makes possible the intensive arable farming which is practised, and which demands large supplies of regular labour and considerable seasonal labour, too. On 4th June, 1938, seasonal workers numbered nearly 20 per cent of all farm workers. The women are chiefly employed in the potato and the bulb and flower section of the county's agriculture, while particularly from March to October, the heavier work of cultivation and harvesting occupies the men.

All the above factors strongly influence the agriculture of Holland and profoundly affect the habits, standard of living, and outlook of the Fen people. The fierce energy with which the Fenman once opposed the schemes which made his land what it is to-day, he now directs into the struggle of wresting from it his livelihood. The whole area is steeped in farming, for the ties which ~~now~~ bind the Fenmen to the land have their roots deep in the past.

II.

THE FEN CHILD AND THE LAND

The Fen[1] child is surrounded by all the environmental factors of the rural dweller and shows many of the characteristics of what we call "the country child", for there does seem a tendency to cast all country children into the one mould. A frequent assertion arising from this generalisation is the fact that country children are duller and less capable of intellectual development than those of the towns. Statements of this type are usually based on the results of Intelligence Tests, in which rural children do not generally show up to advantage. Were we actually to take Intelligence Tests as any real criterion, according to recent investigations in Holland we would be bound to class Fen children as definitely "dull".

The test used was the Northumberland Series, a group test published by Professor Cyril Burt. Though it is generally admitted that group tests are not as satisfactory as individual tests, we have, on the other hand, the affirmation of Lawrence that "though a rough measure, they

---

1. The writer, in this thesis, implies by "Fen children" the children of rural Holland.

are a real measure of something which may be provisionally called intelligence. This is proved by the fact that entirely different ones given to the same set of children will provide results which correlate highly with each other."[1] According to Dr. England, who conducted the inquiry, a total of 959 children attending Holland elementary schools were examined. The selected schools included those of the isolated rural type taking children of all ages, and schools which admitted only senior children. The following table[2] shows a comparison of the Lincolnshire children with those of two other rural areas who were given the "Northumberland Series" of tests :-

INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT	Under 60	60-	70-	80-	90-	100-	110-	120-
LINCS. CHILDREN: (No.	39	83	161	257	190	116	56	57
(%	4.1	8.7	16.8	26.8	19.8	12.1	5.8	5.9
	Total under 80% = 29.5%							
AN EASTERN AREA	-do- = 21%			19.4	27.7	17.4	9.7	4.7
NORTHUMBERLAND	-do- = 7.3%			17.0	24.0	26.8	17.8	7.1

The above figures thus show an excess of Fen children in the

1. Intelligence and Inheritance, Lawrence, E. Brit. J. Psychol. Mono. Supp.16.

2. The Relation between Health and Intelligence in School Children, N. J. England. Journal of Hygiene, Vol.36, No.1.

lower intelligence grades even compared with other rural children.

Enquiries in the schools seem to confirm these findings. Most head teachers, with few exceptions, classify their children as "dull" or "very dull". Typical remarks made to the writer on this matter were in the following vein:

"The standard of intelligence here is low. There are few of what are generally called 'sharp' children."

"The children here are a dull crowd and teaching is a difficult job. You must put out more effort, use more repetition and more illustrations, than for any other children."

"They work very slowly and do not readily pick up new ideas."

"The intellectual level of these children is low though now and again the very bright child makes its appearance."

"On the whole the intellectual standard is poor even for a rural area. In this school we have roughly, 10% sharp children, 50% average and 40% poor."

All agree in describing the children as "slow", and undoubtedly in their power of absorbing ideas, in their

mental processes, in their very movements they are "slow". But one must be chary of drawing too hasty conclusions from these facts.

This is pre-eminently a farming area. To the farmer time is nothing; he may have to wait a whole year for his crop or even several years perhaps before a certain piece of land is developed as he wishes. Deliberate action becomes, therefore, characteristic of the people. Give the Fen child, however, something within his mental grasp or range of ability, and he will at once prove himself neither slow of speech or performance. The point is well illustrated by A. W. Ashby[1]. "Care must be taken to distinguish mental dullness or slowness - that is dullness in apprehension, comprehension and thinking - and slowness in speech. The latter may be due to effort to attain formal speech, or standard English; to lack of facility in the use of forms of speech through lack of practice. Care must also be taken to measure slowness in appropriate subjects of thought. A townsman and a countryman may think and speak about politics at considerably different speeds; they would think and talk

---

1. The Sociological Background of Adult Education in Rural Districts, p.20. British Institute of Adult Education.

about sheep at vastly different speeds."

As with all country children their mental stock, their range of ideas, their powers of expression are so poor, that in school more than anywhere else, they are content to dwell in a state of mental apathy, and only when quite sure of their subject will they venture on complete expression. Often has the writer heard the Fen teacher's sad dictum: "Questions are seldom readily asked in class; answers have to be dragged out of them." Yet give them a subject on which their direct personal experience impinges, and they will give evidence of surprising powers of observation and shrewdness of judgment. The writer well remembers a very quiet, retiring girl who seldom spoke at all in class. One day, during a debate, she amazed everyone by speaking at considerable length on the Milk Marketing Scheme, when she gave a perfectly intelligent criticism of the working of the scheme. The indirect experience of many of these children is narrow, but their range of direct experience surpasses that of most classes of children. Often one finds a child who in school may seem dull and apathetic, yet is a different being once released from the apparently deadening influence of the school walls. At the writer's own school are a number of boarders, and in

class, not a duller crowd could be found anywhere. Yet take these same apparent dullards on a country walk, and they will gladly talk for hours on bird-life, animals, crops, soils, and in fact, show a truly surprising acquaintance with those things which claim their interests and are intimately bound up with their own experience.

A certain tendency to slowness must, of course, be admitted. In the village there are not the same sights and sounds, the bustle and movement, that there are in the towns. A story is told by a teacher in Holland, who once said to a pupil: "Now, Tommy, and what did you see on your way to school this morning?" "Mud, miss," was the short reply. Many Fen dwellers, too, are so isolated that they are even cut off, to some extent, from the village itself[1]. Just exactly what the city offers or contributes towards the development of intelligence is still a fruitful ground of controversy. Undoubtedly the wider stimuli which the city offers through its ever-changing scenes, libraries, museums, more well-equipped schools, organised recreational facilities and its scope for suitable companionship, is bound to have a considerable reaction on the

---

1. See map facing p. 109

intelligence and power of expression of the child. Yet for many of these children, the only contact which they make outside their own little world is the weekly trip to Spalding or Boston, the market towns, where the cinema provides the chief attraction. Indeed, teachers frequently assured the writer that apart from their Saturday outing, many children had never been outside the village and expressed no desire whatever to travel. As for city life, they are definitely not attracted. A questionnaire submitted to the children at Donington Grammar School revealed the fact that 84% preferred to live in the country. This decided preference was confirmed, moreover, by the results of investigations at other schools. Typical reasons given for their choice were as follows: "More fields in the country." "Not so noisy." "More room to roam about, and healthier." "More work - farm labour." "No gardens in towns for vegetables."

What lies at the root of the attachment of these Fen people to the village? For this is not a phase of childhood passing away when adolescence brings a broader outlook and the desire for a fuller life; it is something permanent and enduring. There is much talk these days of the drift from the country to the town; there seems little evidence

of it in this area[1]. Does the village, then, mean so much, and if so, what is the secret of its attraction? The answer seems to lie in this - not that the village satisfies to so great an extent, but that these people are "land-hungry" - the land is in their blood, and to work on the land, whether as a farmer or as a labourer, is the bourne of their children's hopes and visions of the future.

Men's passions are generally complex and the precise nature of the bond which binds the Fenman to the soil is not capable of simple analysis. With the labourer, in some cases lack of ambition and in others, the prospects of a smallholding[2] both play their part. The smallholder has struggled and laboured for what he farms and values what he has gained so dearly. The farmer knows that success in the Fen is estimated by the extent of a man's acres and so he endeavours to leave to his children as great a legacy as possible. All have probably inherited something of that land-love which made their ancestors provide more fierce opposition to the Enclosure Acts than any other people.

---

1. Ministry of Agriculture returns since 1929 show little appreciable decrease in the total number of agricultural workers.

2. See Appendix "E".

Again, there are some who would interpret the whole situation in terms of economics. Some of the land in the Fens is the richest in the country and the soil will yield crop after crop without suffering any apparent deterioration. As one farmer said to the writer: "Farming is worth while down here, you do get a return for your money." The labourer, too, is in a happier position than his fellows elsewhere. His minimum wage is fixed at 37/6d per week[1] - a standard surpassed in no other country - but his average weekly earnings work out at approximately £2 per week[2]. The economic factor undoubtedly plays a most important part, and no one could cast a more shrewd eye on the business side of life than the Fenman. But there is, nevertheless, a genuine delight in the agricultural life which is shared by the great majority of children, particularly those of the smallholder. In view of the comparatively large proportion of this class in Holland[3] the following quotation from the Drage Report[4],

---

1. See Appendix "A".
2. Information given by Mr. Gethin, Secretary of the Holland N.F.U.
3. See page 8.
4. The Drage Report, Vol.I, p.171. H.M.S.O.

a report published in 1919 on conditions in agriculture, is of interest. It reads:

> "The small-holding - or small farm - involves the rearing or keeping of stock; the family of the small-holder grow up with a knowledge of the management of animals and with all the attraction for a country life which this particular branch of farm-industry gives ... If a man has a small-holding and some animals his children grow up and tend them; they are fond of animals and a country life and form a race of sturdy folk who are first-class agricultural labourers."

On this strongly-defined "land-love" in the few, here are some expressions of opinion by teachers and others. "Born of the soil, the soil is in their blood." "They are instilled with one idea - that farming is the be-all and end-all of existence." And this from a Headmistress of a Junior School: "My children seldom talk freely unless the subject is farming on which they have lots to say. Many go picking, ploughing, and leading." One Headmaster who takes a real interest in his boys, both in school and when they leave, says: "Some boys do try to break away from the land but the call is too strong. If they leave

for a time they eventually come back." Another Headmaster revealed the fact that out of sixty scholarship boys who had left his school in the last ten years, only twelve were not working on the land.

It is, unfortunately, impossible to obtain reliable statistics showing occupations taken up by school-leavers. The education authority states that probably 90% of children leaving the elementary schools are absorbed into agricultural pursuits. The following table has been drawn up from Ministry of Labour returns. It is neither official nor complete, as it refers only to those who have come on to the Ministry's books and thus does not include children who are engaged on their fathers' farms. Further, it takes within its compass only the area within the scope of the Spalding Ministry of Labour authorities, and it includes the town of Spalding itself. It does, however, give a general idea of the labour market and indicates the attraction of the land.

Industry	Boys		Girls	
	16-17	14-15	16-17	14-15
Building	25	18	2	-
Public Work Construction	3	-	-	-
General Engineering	4	5	-	1
Motor Repairs	22	12	3	1
Box Making	1	2	3	1
Hotel work	2	2	12	6
Laundry Service	-	-	5	4
Dry Cleaning	-	1	-	2
Railways	3	1	-	-
Road Transport	3	-	-	-
Printing and Publishing	4	7	1	-
Bread Making	4	3	4	1
Food (Canning, etc.)	1	1	6	1
Drink (Bottling)	4	5	-	-
Distributive Trades	107	106	80	60
National Service	5	2	5	-
Local Government	8	4	1	-
Professional Services	7	6	5	3
Entertainments	1	1	2	3
Not specified	4	4	7	6
Agriculture	220	181	74	39
Horticulture	80	51	204	154
Gardening	3	2	-	-
TOTALS	512	414	414	282

As regards totals, it will be seen that Agriculture and Horticulture are easily first while the next highest, the Distributive Trades, is bound to include a very high proportion of town children. The land is always ready to

receive the boy or girl leaving school, and the demand for labour is likely to become greater rather than less. Late years have witnessed a change in the type of agriculture as practised in Holland - chiefly in the expansion of market-gardening and of bulb-growing. In 1931 the acreage under bulbs was less than 2,000. In 1938 this rose to just over 5,000[1]. Both these agricultural pursuits require a greater supply of labour and the demand includes girls as well as boys, for there is a great deal of seasonal work when large numbers of "pickers" are needed. This brings in its train an acute shortage of domestic labour, for the general opinion seems to be that given the choice, girls nearly always prefer land work. Figures are not available as to the number of girls in domestic service, but those of the previous table offer some evidence of the popularity of agriculture and horticulture. A Headmaster's wife tells the story of her own maid, who "lived in", earned 10/- a week and was very happy. But she eventually went on the land - "she couldn't help herself".

---

1. Figures supplied by the Principal of Kirton Agricultural Institute.

Must we seek an explanation of this drift to the land in economic or psychological reasons? Girls' work is paid at the rate of 6d per hour[1] and there are ample opportunities of over-time employment, so that in the height of the season, girls can earn considerable sums. The extra earnings provide them with small luxuries and money to spend on the Saturday visit to the market town. On the other hand, perhaps we have in the situation evidence of the village girl's desire for companionship and intercourse with girls of her own age. Or is it purely the satisfaction of the adolescent's urge to freedom and independence? Whatever the explanation, it is clear that domestic service must offer greater attractions if it is to compete with land work.

Long before the school-leaving age is attained, however, these Fen children have become acquainted with all the sights and sounds, and with many of the manual operations of the farm. The smallholders' and farmers' children on their own farms, labourers' children on others' - all become bound to the farm and farming by a multitude of ties even during their school career. Moreover, the fact that they

---

1. See Appendix "A".

are able to earn money as children breeds a sense of pride and faith in the occupation which has some use for them. This is encouraged by School Managers, who actually arrange holidays to coincide with seasonal work. An essay written by elementary school children on "How I spent my summer holidays", revealed the wide variety of farming activities in which many of them take part. Here are a few extracts:-

"On September 3rd I broke up for my school holidays. All my holiday was spent working and the greatest part working horses. I have harrowed 16 acres of land and duckfooted 5 acres. In some of my holiday, I was driving carts and in the last three days I was on the stack and I had to work after tea."

" ... The next week I went to Mr. Walter Thorpe's. We picked two fields of potatoes, in one week. The last week I stayed at home and did some work."

"When we broke up for our later part of the summer holidays I went to work for Mr. Hardy. I was sent leading carts for the first two days. When we finished leading oats, we went potato-picking and the women only had to get five ton up a day. When we got the five ton

of potatoes up we went seed-cutting ... The last week I was at work I was potato picking, plant drawing, and pulling weeds out of sugar beet."

The following are from girls' essays:-

"During my summer holidays, I went potato-picking. I went potato-picking for the first two weeks at Mr. North's. I got three shillings and sixpence a day. The land was hard and it made our fingers sore."

"The first week I went picking potatoes for Mr. Cope. Each night of the week I did a piece of gardening. On the Saturday morning, I helped my mother in the house. Monday morning I went to pick potatoes for Mr. Sharpe. Two or three nights of the week I did gardening."

The above examples are by no means exceptional but illustrate typical holiday occupations; there is even a place for the "under-elevens".

Unemployment among the population as a whole is uncommon apart from one or two months in the year[1]. Work

---

1. Information from Employment Exchange and Secretary of National Farmers' Union.

for all means, therefore, that life inclines to run on a very even tempo. There is a marked absence, for example, of that hard struggle for existence which is so painfully in evidence in some of our industrial areas. In many of these parts we have the sad spectacle of boys growing into manhood, who are still idle, and children approaching the close of their school career cannot but look with many misgivings on the empty prospect which lies ahead of them. School does, however, have some meaning, for it is the child who is most successful whose chances, when he leaves, are a little brighter.

But the Fen child is spurred on by no prizes to which the school is a ladder, and he has few examples before him of those who have climbed the ladder in virtue of the school. Nature is a good mistress and treats her servants well, and he looks out on a world which seems to satisfy most of his needs. The proximity of an environment which bears no marks of struggle tends to a certain dulling of the intellect and engenders a quiet, almost stolid, placidity. Discipline thus comes easy and difficult children are rare.

III.

THE HOME ENVIRONMENT

Much as the school can do to mould and develop the child in mind and body, it is to the home itself that we must look as one of the most powerful influences that are brought to bear on the child. All the early years, all the holidays, and many hours every day, are passed under influences which may be most helpful or yet may be directly antagonistic to healthy development. The influence of the home on character, mental equipment, and outlook, must bear serious consideration.

From the writer's own observations and from general reports the Fen home, as regards cleanliness, compares favourably with most working-class homes. S. H. Miller in his "Handbook to the Fenland," written towards the end of last century, is more eulogistic. "Their household appointments," he writes, "will compare most favourably with those in any other part of this kingdom. There are no more tidy housewives than in the Fens." Other opinions gleaned by the writer from a variety of sources are somewhat more restrained.

"80% of the homes are very clean. But they are lacking in home comforts."

"The houses are on the whole neat and tidy except for those of the inevitable 'blacksheep' families."

"The homes are in many cases dreadful places as buildings but very few are neglected."

"The majority of houses in this village, though lacking in other respects, are at least kept clean."

Actual facts, however, disclosed by personal and systematic investigation[1] make clear in many cases the full extent of this "lack in other respects." Often enough a cottage has no back-yard or garden. The building may be right up to the pavement with the only suitable door opening on to the street through which everything entering and leaving the cottage must pass. In one row of dwellings, everything is brought through the living-room and emptied just outside the door into the street gutter. In ~~one~~ a house visited by an investigator, the floor was rough and broken. He remarked on its dirty appearance and the reply was, "Oh, the stones are just set in the natural mud, and

---

1. The writer is indebted to Mr. Saunders, architect to the Holland Rural District Council, for many of the facts on Housing.

the more you wash them, the more mud you make." Upstairs, he noticed that the floor of one bedroom was patched up with pieces of boxwood nailed to the floor boards in so many places that he enquired the reason. "The feet of the bedstead keep going through," he was told. "We only get to sleep on fine nights. When it rains we have to keep moving the bed and furniture from place to place around the room, trying to miss the leaky places in the roof."

Many cottages have no outhouse. If they are lucky enough to have a copper, it is usually broken and unusable, standing out in the open, with no shelter at all. The mother or daughter of the house must, therefore, stand outside in the bleakness of the country air, and attempt to keep the fire going and do her washing. In houses without a copper the people manage by boiling the clothes on the living-room fire. Baths are of course a luxury. Not a single one was found in any of the five hundred houses inspected[1].

Imagine the effect of such conditions on children's minds, on their habits, on their outlook. Neglect of personal cleanliness and attention to hygiene, coarse

---

1. Survey undertaken for the Ministry of Health.

manners, a dulling of the senses and blunting of the finer susceptibilities, - all these factors become evident. How difficult then becomes the task of the school in cultivating aesthetic appreciation, inculcating principles of hygiene, and encouraging decent behaviour. In these respects the school will never reap its just reward until counteracting home influences are removed. The situation is made worse a hundred-fold when among other things, the evils of overcrowding have to be contended with. How serious the overcrowding is in this area it is difficult to say. An extract[1] from the Drage Report reads "There are some 6,000 cottages in the Holland division. It has been stated that at least half of these have only two bedrooms, usually one fair-sized and one small, and that at least 300 more possess only one bedroom." Housing conditions have not greatly improved since 1919 and it is fairly certain that there must be considerable overcrowding to-day, as is borne out by the following table[2], which was drawn up in 1936 after nearly one thousand children had been asked whether they slept alone or shared a bed.

---

1. Vol.II, p.170.

2. The Relation between Health and Intelligence in School Children, p.81.

Sleeping alone	31·4%
Sleeping with 1	52·5%
Sleeping with 2	10·8%
Sleeping with 3	2·3%

Lack of space in a home can be dreadfully trying. Parents, weary after the day's labours, are apt to be jarred and irritated by their children's presence; tempers are frayed and the child suffers in consequence. Mr. Robertson Scott paints a vivid picture of the background of many a rural child[1].

> "But try the effect of living in conditions quite other from those you do live in. Suppose you could very rarely have freedom to strip. Suppose every drop of water used in your house had to be brought into the dwelling in a pail after having been carried, in good or bad weather, from down the road. Suppose you had to wear, day after day, clothes you had worked and sweated in. Suppose you never seemed to have anywhere to put your things. Suppose you had to sleep always two,

1. Quoted in The Country Child, by M. K. Ashby, p.156.

sometimes three in a bed, in a narrow, low, stuffy room. Suppose that in your home you were absolutely without privacy by day or night. Suppose you had continually to share the physical and mental life of other people. Suppose you were frayed by being without the necessary space for children's lessons and play, for cooking, for washing day, for conversation or reflection, or rest, or for decent protection against visitors. Suppose that there were in your life, things not only angering but grossly unhealthy and disgusting. Suppose that even a home with all these limitations, and, as like as not, leaking in the roof, would be lost to you, if you complained or changed your employer. How would you be affected by such an environment, not for a time, but for years on end ? There can be no question how you would be affected. You would sink."

How can homes such as these - and they are not uncommon in the Fen - provide room for play and recreational activities or encouragement to quiet reading ? Can we wonder if the child prefers the spaciousness of the village street to the narrow confines of the home ? In this respect strong criticism must be levelled at the common Fen practice of both parents going out to work, though it is recognised that

often this is an economic necessity. But the effect on home-life is not a happy one. As the housewife is out all day, the daily round of housework and cooking begins when the child returns at the end of the day's school, and the child is sent out into the village street while the cleaning is in process. This may be tolerable in summer when fields and lanes offer such a diversity of attractions, but in winter it is an undoubted handicap. The child can't read in the street, or pursue any hobby, or use his tools, and the habit is developed of congregating in gangs comprising children of all ages and both sexes under the street lamps. As long ago as 1886, Charles Whymper[1], the Fen historian, recognised the evils of the situation. Discussing women's work on the land he writes: "By far the most serious objection to the system is the certain loss of some of those womanly qualities which must exist in peasant as in peeress, if she is to hold the proud position she is accorded by every Englishman. A blunting of her finer susceptibilities and a roughening of her nature are the inevitable result of constant toil in field labours. We are also afraid that owing to the too exacting and

---

1. The English Peasantry at Home, by Chas. Whymper, in Good Words, a magazine edited by John Macleod, Jan., 1886. (Lincoln Pub. Lib.).

laborious life which the Fen women lead in field-working, the true interests of the children are neglected."

Several Headmasters have expressed themselves very forcibly on this matter.

> "It is no uncommon thing for the children to be in the school-yard at 7 o'clock in the summer. Their parents have to be at work early and so all the family get up together. Unfortunately early rising is not compensated for by an early retiring to bed."
>
> "The root of much evil is the habit of both parents going out to work."
>
> "The conditions in the home and the lack of recreational facilities in the village have much to account for."
>
> "The home is not a home in the best sense of the word. It is merely a place in which to eat and sleep."

"A place in which to eat and sleep" – that phrase strikes to the truth of the position in many homes. When the child returns from school his parents are too tired to talk or answer questions, and he is presented with few opportunities of conversation or expression of opinion. Nor does he have any chance of meeting or talking with neighbours, for the Fenman has never acquired the habit of "dropping in"

on his friends and in any case, his comparative isolation militates against this.

The population of the County is distributed very evenly over its whole area[1] and in this respect differs from most other counties in England. Needless to say, there are many homes, particularly those of the farmer and the larger smallholder, where the foregoing criticisms do not apply. But the practice of labourers' wives working on the land is pernicious to a degree, and as long as it is continued, their homes will never give that stimulation to mental development which it is in so fortunate a position to offer.

Physically, the children are well looked after; mentally, they are under-nourished. A teacher says: "My children, at five, have only the smallest vocabularies; they are shy, awkward, and clumsy."

Another writes: "Their early training is not of the best. In some cases, the parents go out to work and leave the infants with other people to fare as well as they can." Most children at five have missed all those things which a real home environment would have given them - toys and things to handle, little picture books, and especially conversation in which the child has learnt names of things and gained

---

1. See Map. P.109

confidence in himself. But all through their school careers teachers are constantly endeavouring to counteract the weaknesses of the home environment. "Limited conversation is their great failing", said one Headmaster. "Their stock of ideas is poor in the extreme." Another teacher declares: "The only conversation they hear in the home is farm-talk, and they themselves are happiest when discussing the same subject."

Farm-talk, it is true, forms their staple mental nourishment. The farmer is always in sight of his work; he doesn't shut up shop and go home. In Holland, too, farmers have farmers as neighbours, and it might be a pleasant flight of the imagination to picture the situation should all butchers or all clerks live together in a community. As for the housewife in the Fens, her multifarious duties give her little time even to read the newspaper or to come into contact with the world outside. The child, therefore, encounters no flow of ideas and hears conversation which is woefully limited in subject-matter. In short, he greatly lacks material upon which to exercise his thoughts and fancies.

Their acquaintance with books, or rather lack of it, combined with their limited conversation, largely account

for their poor mental equipment. The distaste for reading and scarcity of books is a common feature of the home, even of that of the well-to-do farmer. In many, a Bible and a few tattered volumes form the sole stock, and in some, not even a daily newspaper is taken in. The reading habit has never been cultivated nor has it been encouraged. It was only last year that the County Library first made its appearance. The establishment of this highly desirable institution is bound to bring a big change in people's attitudes, as the tendency in the past seems to have been to regard books as very far removed from the work-a-day world. On the cultural value of books and the importance of the reading habit here is one verdict[1]: "When all is said and done, the child who does not learn to love and use books is mentally but one stage removed from the intelligent savage. The education of the backwoods, which is that of nature study pure and simple, renders, as I have seen for myself, the five senses alert; it gives the basis of concrete ideas on which reason and imagination can build. But without books the mind is limited to observation of the environment; it cannot inherit the mental legacy of the race, nor can

---

1. The Problem of Rural Schools and Teachers in North America, p.9. Board of Educ. Pamphlets.

nature study develop into natural science, history, geography, or literature. Without books much future self-education is debarred, and much power of getting the best out of life. Hence the importance of rural libraries."

Yet in some Fen homes the only books which have entered the house for many years are those which the children bring as prizes. An amusing story is told by a teacher of one household, where the child's prizes are placed neatly on a shelf and presumably have their daily dusting, but the child is not allowed to touch or take them down in case he "marks" them. Even in the better-class homes conditions are often not much better. In the writer's own school, children were asked to find out how many books were in their homes. The following information was revealed:-

Homes with less than 20 ..... 75%
Homes with 20 - 40 ..... 20%
Homes with 50 or more 5%

And yet it is through books alone that the Fen child can step beyond the narrow limits of his small world, for it is fairly certain that his own excursions will be limited to surrounding villages, the county market towns, and an occasional visit to Skegness. Fen people are no travellers.

The insularity of the countryman is a common characteristic and here it is accentuated by the dispersed nature of the population and the under-development of passenger services. Teachers have been amazed to find that quite large numbers of children have never been in a train. One Headmaster firmly believes that the Fenman does not travel because he has no motive. He does not easily make friends and as there is so little real home life, so there are no deep family ties. Consequently, the children remain at home.

If the Fen home then lacks books and social intercourse, can we hope that the wireless will to some extent compensate for the deficiency ? Enquiries prove that wireless is popular but as regards its function as an educator, investigations by at least five Headmasters, prove very disappointing. In each case, it was found that the greatest proportion of time was spent in listening to variety. Talks were almost entirely neglected. It seems, therefore, until the wireless set becomes an essential part of the school's equipment and the child can be educated in its use, there is little hope of any change in the position. On the other hand, the obvious popularity of the news, as proved by the enquiries, gives grounds for thinking that possibly the wireless brings the household into much closer touch with

events and affairs of the outside world than could ever have been accomplished through the medium of the newspaper.

The financial position of the parents considerably colours their attitude to school and to education in general. The labourer looks forward eagerly to the day when his children's earnings will augment his own and so bring about a general rise in his standard of living. School, he thinks, gives a certain necessary equipment particularly in the matter of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but the sooner the child gets over his school-days the better for the whole family. "90% of my children claim exemption on their 14th birthday" is the comment of many Headmasters. "They enter their children at school as young as possible and withdraw them as early as possible", a teacher says. The children of the labourer and the struggling smallholder do not always get their chance, and teachers frequently assured the writer that the secondary school never sees some of their best children. Their parents simply can't afford it. As will be seen from the following figures[1], the total number of scholarships[2] awarded by the Authority in any year is only very small:-

---

1. Supplied by His Majesty's Inspector.
2. In the whole County.

	Exemption from Fees		
	Total	Partial	No exemption
1937 - 1938	16	2	2
1938 - 1939	14	-	4

For the same years, the following number of scholarships were given by the Governing Bodies of four schools:-

	Exemption from Fees		
	Total	Partial	No exemption
1937 - 1938	41	2	-
1938 - 1939	41	2	3

Some parents are, of course, much more interested in the school. A Headmaster reports that many parents in his area want to know what the child is suitable for. Another declares that whatever their opinions on the school, they do like their children to get on. But the general feeling among teachers is that the parents are apathetic to the work of the school. Some teachers complain that parents won't buy frocks and other things made in school if their cost is more than a shilling. Others, that they can't get the support of parents over the provision of sports' equipment. And the poor response to displays and exhibitions seems to be common. "The unfortunate part is this:" says

one Headmaster. "The children realise the parents' indifference to the school and they themselves take up the same attitude".

The smallholder, particularly the "small man", is apt to look on education from a strictly practical point of view. He is quite anxious for his children to do well, for success in farming to-day demands a strict eye to the business of accounts. Moreover, as government legislation is extended, the amount of clerical work involved in the running of a farm is ever on the increase. But once a certain proficiency has been gained, there is no one more eager than he to have his children on the farm. The smallholder works on a small capital outlay; he cannot afford such mechanical aids as tractors or even employ a full team of horses; nor can he buy in large quantities. His costs, therefore, are proportionately much higher and so he must utilise every source of family labour. Often the very success of the holding depends on the unpaid services of his children.

As for the larger farmer, thrifty and industrious himself, he trains his children in a hard school. A certain standard of education he considers is socially and practically essential, but if his child promises to be a good farmer he will not worry unduly over his lack of progress at school.

Before ever the holding or the farm claims them fully, the children have attempted most of the jobs done by their parents. To the question "What odd jobs do you do at home ?" submitted to the boys of Donington Grammar School, the following answers were obtained:-

Form III^{B}.

1. Work in the shop.
2. Gardening.
3. Feed chickens; help plant-setting in the fields; help to chain bags in the mill.
4. Wash doors, peel potatoes, clean out 30 poultry huts.
5. Gardening.
6. Feed the poultry.
7. Household jobs.
8. Look after the poultry.
9. Household duties.
10. Carry water.

Form III^{A}.

1. Gardening and fruit-pulling.
2. Milk, set plants, harrow, drag and plough.
3. Messages.
4. Feed poultry and make things for the house.
5. Feed poultry and help on the farm.

6. Household duties.
7. Work on the farm.
8. Household duties.
9. Work in the fields.
10. All light farming jobs.
11. Help with the farm-work.

Form Remove B.

1. Gardening.
2. Household duties.
3. Feed poultry.
4. Household duties.
5. Work on the farm. Sometimes plough.
6. Help with planting.
7. Help in the shop.

Form Remove A.

1. Pick fruit and collect eggs.
2. Household duties.
3. Gardening.
4. Feed pigs and chickens.
5. Gardening.
6. Churning and separating and other work on the farm.
7. Feed chickens, etc.
8. Pick flowers, sort and clean bulbs, work among tomatoes.

9. Household duties.

10. Feed chickens and other jobs.

Fourth Form.

1, 2 and 3. None.

4. Leading, singling, potato-picking and setting.

5. Household tasks.

6. Household tasks, looking after fowls and other things.

7. All kinds of work on the farm, particularly at harvest.

On the farm itself, the Fen child will compare favourably with other country children in the thoroughness of its work, as is well attested from the following expressions of opinion gleaned from farmers and others:-

"The boys are a hard-working lot, and the girls can be extremely useful on the land itself and in the farm-yard."

"The boys are generally excellent workers. They don't always shew a great deal of initiative but once they have been shewn how to do a job, it's fairly certain that it will be done well."

"Some boys, when they leave school, are almost as good as full-grown men."

"Both boys and girls are extremely industrious and enjoy the work."

The labourer's child, hawking stuff round to eke out the family income, the smallholder's child, working for the success of the holding, and the farmer's child living in a world of profits and prices, soon acquire the habit of thinking in commercial terms and the feeling that life is a matter of pounds, shillings and pence. The money-value of conduct impresses itself on them all. Indeed, it is quite amazing the extent to which this outlook has been developed. The writer well remembers the occasion when he gave a class an instance of profiteering and attempted to draw the appropriate moral. To his astonishment, the whole class protested vigorously that it was up to everyone to make as much money as they could. To the Fen child and the Fen people, "success" means commercial success - the acquisition of a substantial bank balance. Perhaps this accounts for the attitude taken up by many parents of regarding with suspicion anything that is done by the teachers for the children. Strict business people themselves they feel, no doubt, that there is some deep motive behind any exhibition of generosity. An extract from a letter written by an old resident is worth quoting. "If education had to be paid

for," she writes, "these people would appreciate it more. But as far as school education goes, you can hardly expect them to rate it highly for they have shewn that it can be done without. The successful people are not the educated ones." She then proceeds to give examples of several prosperous farmers who, it is reported on good authority, have but the bare rudiments of reading and writing.

There is no conception of education as a training of the mind, or as a preparation for leisure and a richer and fuller life. The children themselves consider that its purpose is "to prepare them for work". Parents who have children at school must themselves have left a matter of twenty years ago, and they have little conception of how school methods and the aim of the school have so radically changed. Ideas filter very slowly into the village and the Fenman does not readily renounce fixed opinions and views. Criticism of the school which the child hears in the home, helps to mould his own opinion of certain school subjects and the relation between school and life. Only persistent effort on the part of those who have the future welfare of the children at heart will bring any change in outlook.

IV.

FACTORS INFLUENCING HEALTH AND PHYSIQUE

The casual observer visiting the Fen schools would probably conclude that on the whole these Fen children appear well-nourished, decently clothed, and in short, typical specimens of the healthy country-child. This is confirmed by reports from Head Teachers.

> "The children are quite healthy and well-nurtured."
>
> "The standard of health in this village, apart from a few tainted families, is a high one."
>
> "As regards nutrition these children are well looked after. It is not often, moreover, one sees a child poorly clothed or shod."
>
> "The children are well cared for. Our attendances are usually over 90%."
>
> "Health is fairly good though the children lack that healthy glow one usually associates with country children. They are not attractive-looking."

Statistical evidence of a fairly high standard of physique throughout the area is afforded by the investigations of Dr. England with regard to heights and weights. The

following table[1] shows the average heights and weights of children under investigation as compared with those of the Isle of Ely.

Height and Weight Table

Age Group Years	Number Measured		Mean Height in inches		Mean Weight in lbs.	
	Holland	Ely	Holland	Ely	Holland	Ely
Boys:-						
9-	69	164	52·0	51·3	66·0	62·4
10-	67	148	52·3	52·8	68·8	66·7
11-	101	166	54·7	54·9	73·7	74·1
12-	111	165	58·0	57·1	80·6	83·4
13-14	119	140	58·2	58·8	90·1	91·3
Girls:-						
9-	77	121	51·0	51·0	63·0	60·3
10-	77	131	53·4	53·0	71·4	66·6
11-	96	146	55·5	55·4	77·0	75·1
12-	118	155	58·1	57·9	86·6	85·9
13-14	121	109	59·8	59·4	94·0	92·1

The Isle of Ely is mainly agricultural and the Ely figures are generally regarded as showing a high standard of

1. The Relation between Health and Intelligence in School Children, p.76.

physique. As the Holland figures are so close in agreement it must be concluded, therefore, that for a rural area the Holland children are probably rather above the average of physique.

In view of this evidence it is not surprising to find every indication that the children are well fed in the sense that they get sufficient to eat. The Fenman does not economise on food and there is a marked absence of the thin, pinched-looking faces which denote under-nourishment. The following table[1] indicates that quite a high standard of nutrition is fairly general.

Classification of the nutrition of children inspected during the year 1937 in the routine age groups.

Age Groups	No. of children inspected	Classification							
		A (Excellent)		B (Normal)		C (Slightly Sub-Normal)		D (Bad)	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Entrants	1046	71	6·8	922	88·1	53	5·1	-	-
Second Age Group	1021	107	10·4	862	84·5	51	5·0	1	0·1
Third Age Group	842	127	15·1	681	80·9	34	4·0	-	
TOTAL	2909	305	10·49	2645	84·74	138	4·74	1	0·03

1. Report of School Medical Officer, 1937, p.27.

Vegetables and potatoes are fairly cheap and lots of houses have some small plot of land attached where foodstuffs can be grown. Meals provided by the parents are quite sensible, and as one teacher says "there is none of this bread and jam business". Exception must, however, be taken to the mid-day meal which tends to be far from satisfactory. A large number of children, owing to the distance of the school from their homes, bring a cold meal with them, while others who can get home have something cold at mid-day in cases where both parents are at work. Investigations have proved that where sandwiches are brought only 10% have a meat content and that 80% of the meals are principally bread and butter and sweet cakes[1]. In the evening, it is true, the children do have a hot meal, but on top of this they go to bed which is certainly not good from a health point of view.

The ideal, of course, is for every school to have provision for a hot meal at mid-day; indeed, all medical authorities agree that it is most essential to the child, both from the physical and from the mental point of view. One Headmaster's testimony to the School Canteen is worthy

---

1. Figures supplied by the County Medical Officer of Health.

of note.[1] He says, "Our experience is that Canteen children can actually be picked out from a class during the afternoon, solely by the greater vitality shown and increased interest in school work. In comparison with children who bring a packed lunch, the difference is most marked. Apart from the fact that the food brought is cold and stale, the element of surprise is missing. To my mind the greatest aid to digestion and the enjoyment of food is not knowing exactly what the meal is going to be, or what it is going to taste like." Another Report says "The meal seems to help children over the period of lowest vitality, i.e., 2 - 3 p.m. They are less sleepy, more alert and better able to concentrate."

It is to be regretted that in Holland schools there is a great dearth of the necessary facilities for providing meals[2]. Something has been done to make up for the deficiency of supplying the children with a hot drink, and in 1937 a total of about 53% of the school population was being provided with some form of nourishment[3].

---

1. An Experiment in Rural Reorganisation, p.32.
2. Only one school has ever attempted to provide a hot meal. The experiment was discontinued.
3. Report of School Medical Officer, 1937, p.21.

Conditions vary as to the atmosphere in which the mid-day meal is eaten and depend largely on the energy of the teacher in charge. In many schools there seems to be proper supervision, but in some the situation is much less satisfactory. In the writer's own school, for example, until recently the children huddled round the fire or lounged around in the school corridors, and in fine weather sat out in the school playground. Here again, the School Canteen has a definite educational as well as physical value. One Report says[1], "The educational value of a School Canteen is, to my mind, of greater importance even than the physical benefits. The Canteen meal provides an opportunity for an informal School gathering under pleasant, and reasonably unrestricted, conditions. Here the children sit in their Houses with their leaders in charge. House Captains serve the meals on their tables, and are responsible for table behaviour. This is of very real value to the School discipline and organisation. ..... At table, House matters are discussed informally and the children derive great benefit from that interchange of ideas which comes freely whilst sitting at meals."

---

1. An Experiment in Rural Reorganisation, p.33.

The clothing problem is, in many cases, solved by the children themselves, who purchase clothes, boots, and shoes out of their own earnings. This practice is common throughout the whole area and it is surprising what large sums these children can and do earn. A certain Headmaster is fond of quoting the example of one little fellow of nine years who in a summer holiday earned nearly two pounds ten shillings! A few extracts from essays written by children on their holidays may serve to illustrate their earning capacity and to what use it is put.

> "During the holidays I was earning money for a pair of strong winter boots, a new top coat, and a pair of new football boots."
>
> "I went to work for my clothes and boots for the winter and to finish paying for my bicycle. My mother let me keep one shilling a week."
>
> "I went to Boston and bought myself a new suit with the money I had earned potatoe-picking."

In view of the unusual amount of manual labour performed by the children and the fact that the average cycle ride to school is between two and three miles, the writer has

often discussed with members of the medical profession the possible effects on the growing child. To measure such effects is, needless to say, an exceedingly difficult matter. There may be a certain tendency to develop postural defects, but it is impossible to be dogmatic on this point. The actual number of children with orthopaedic and postural defects who were treated in 1937 was 146[1] but this, of course, includes only the more serious cases. The general conclusion seems to be that the extra earnings make so great a difference to the economic position of the family that any disadvantages are more than offset.

However, looked at from the teacher's point of view rather than from that of the medical practitioner, there is more to be said on this matter. Excessive physical activity is bound to have a deleterious effect on the child's school work and this is frequently painfully obvious. The boys in particular, will appear tired and listless and in several cases, enquiries into the reason for neglect of home preparation has proved that the child

---

1. Report of School Medical Officer, p.33.

has simply not had the time to devote to his school work, or has been so fatigued that he has done it in a careless and slipshod manner.

The position is particularly serious in the case of the secondary school child who has home duties, school games, and the journey to and from school in all weathers to contend with. Teachers frequently complain that they can't get the best out of the children and lay the blame on the parents. One boy, and he is no exception, informed the writer that he is up every morning shortly after six, and spends an hour-and-a-half looking after poultry. Breakfast over, he is faced with a four-mile cycle ride to school. When he returns home at night there are further tasks to be performed.

Reports from the elementary schools vary. In some cases Head Teachers declared that they had observed no marked effect on the children of outside duties; others were of the opinion that individuals in particular suffered.

> "The children do not seem to suffer unduly in this respect. But there is occasionally a marked effect on the child of less sturdy physique."

"I have often had feeling that some children do not always derive full benefit from the holidays; they have been worked too hard."

"In some cases enquiries into the family circumstances of a boy who appeared particularly lazy in class, proved that he had a large number of home duties to perform."

In view of the great benefits which accrue to the household in which the child necessarily shares, it does not seem desirable to prohibit the employment of children entirely, as some Authorities have done. But particularly the parents of the secondary school child should be urged to give their children every possible chance. As long as the present position continues, the full mental development of the child cannot possibly be attained.

The most serious factor militating against sound health progress is the condition of housing, which in Holland is indescribably bad. Up to the 31st March, 1936, no attempt whatever at amelioration had been made, building under the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts being practically non-existent[1]. It was not until 1937 that a survey of

---

1. See Appendix, Rural Housing. H.M.S.O.

more than 500 houses was undertaken and revealed an appalling state of affairs. "Sinks of filth", "deplorably wretched", "plague-stricken habitations", were epithets then used to describe most of these rural cottages. Many a roof, charmingly picturesque no doubt in appearance, was found to be literally pest-ridden and badly affecting the health of the tenants, while often the walls were oozing slimy dirt. Bad sanitation, dampness, lack of sunshine, poor water supply - all these defects are present, and particularly severe are the criticisms on sanitation. There are hundreds of houses where the sanitary conditions are deplorable. "Not one cottage in a hundred has a sink" says one investigator. "The refuse and waste water is often thrown on to a heap just outside the door (a haven of happiness for flies) and when the wind is in the right direction, you can imagine the result".

Pantries, most necessary in view of such unhygienic conditions, were found to be practically non-existent. Instead, the houses have either open shelves in the scullery to catch the dust and dirt that flies about, or else the food is kept in a hot, stuffy cupboard next to the living-range. "In many houses," it is reported, "the cupboard under the stairs is used as a larder, where there is no

ventilation and where the place reeks with that fusty smell one gets when going into a dark, damp and unventilated cellar."

This, it must be remembered, is in a rural area where, according to Ministry of Health statistics, only 20%-30% of the children are "Schick-negative", which means that almost 80% are liable to diphtheria. The position then is one fraught with grave danger. According to the Report of the Holland School Medical Officer, in 1937[1] three schools were completely closed - two on account of diphtheria, and 67 certificates were given because attendance had fallen below 60% owing to the prevalence of infectious diseases as follows: Measles 23; Chicken Pox 7; Influenza 13; Mumps 8; Measles and Chicken Pox 1; Mumps and Whooping Cough 2; Scarlet Fever and Influenza 1; Measles and Influenza 6; Chicken Pox, Influenza and Jaundice 1; Whooping Cough and Influenza 1; Mumps and Influenza 2; Measles, Mumps and Influenza 2; Sore Throats and Colds 1. The same report shows that 16% of the 2,909 children inspected in that year were found to require treatment.

---

1. See page 9.

Surely we can see here, in large measure, cause and effect. Conditions such as have been described must inevitably be breeding grounds of disease and the source of much misery and suffering. During the vital years of childhood, exposure to such influences is absolutely prohibitive of sound, healthy growth. It is fortunate, indeed, that the County possesses a School Medical Service whose efficiency cannot be doubted. But until bad housing, root cause of so much disease and ill-health, is eradicated, its work is in large measure discounted.

Throughout Holland a systematic inspection of children is carried out by the School Medical Officers. Under normal conditions the following groups of children are examined:-

(a) All children within 12 months of their entry into school.

(b) All children within 12 months of attaining their eighth birthday.

(c) All children within 12 months of attaining their twelfth birthday.

In addition, special cases submitted by parents or teachers are examined irrespective of age, together with all children found to be suffering from defects at the previous

inspection, or who were absent from such inspection. Parents are advised of any defects, and eye treatment and dentistry are given free when necessary. Under a new scheme, each child, after the initial payment of a shilling, has now free dental service throughout the whole of its school career.

The co-operation of parents with the Health Services varies in different villages. Among some parents there is absolute apathy and sometimes distinct opposition. "Parents are improving," says one Headmaster, "but many still fight shy." "Some parents," a teacher declares, "will deliberately keep their children at home on medical inspection days." And the following Report comes from a Headmistress: "Some time ago, if it was a question of the Clinic, the children would tell me that 'Mum said I wasn't to go.' Now they come and ask to go." On the matter of co-operation the County Medical Officer reports[1]: "A welcome point about the year's work is the increase in special inspections made. These are inspections performed at the special request of the teacher or parent. In this way early defects are brought to the notice of the School

---

1. Report of School Medical Officer, p.7.

Medical Officer. It is gratifying to record this expression of satisfaction with and confidence in the School Medical Service. It largely reflects the result of the previous years' education in health problems."

The greatest opposition, or perhaps apathy on the part of the parents, is concerned with dental treatment. The teeth of the Holland children are probably worse than the average. "The childrens' teeth are rotten" says one of the Medical Officers of Health who attributes this highly unsatisfactory condition to an undue proportion of bread and potatoes in the diet. Out of 7,401 school children examined in 1937, 6,082 were found to require treatment[1]. Actually, only 40% of these were treated, which means, in effect, that parents are lacking in responsibility or else that the fundamental importance of a healthy mouth to the health of the growing child is not realised.

Sheer ignorance on the part of parents is too often the greatest impediment to any improvement in health conditions. It is, then, to the broadening influence of a good general education and the force of specific instruction in food values and principles of health and hygiene that the future must look for any amelioration. In this respect

---

1. Report of School Medical Officer, p.17.

the school plays a vital part, for the children must be induced to carry into their own homes the principles and standards which it endeavours to put before them.

V.

THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Many years must pass before we shall see every child housed in a school building worthy of the great part which the school plays as an educator. Ideas have changed since the days when the business of a school was not to educate but to instruct children and the school was built with that aim in view. The buildings problem is, in part, bound up with the religious problem, in view of the fact that the worst schools in this respect are generally Church schools. Out of a total of 86 schools, Holland has 39 which are voluntary[1], and it is from these schools come the most severe criticisms on the part of the teachers.

One of the greatest difficulties is the question of accommodation[2]. Very seldom did the writer encounter a school where conditions were satisfactory, and in certain cases of overcrowding, there was not even a partition to divide classes. Such conditions react strongly and unfavourably on the unfortunate teachers who are forced to

---

1. Holland County Council List A.1.

2. See Appendix "B".

take lessons in each other's presence. At the same time, the attention of the children is bound to be distracted to some extent by activities in the neighbouring class. In these circumstances, satisfactory teaching cannot be expected and children have constantly to be restricted for fear of disturbing their neighbours.

An infant mistress feels strongly on this point. "Insufficient accommodation," she says, "is particularly a handicap in the case of infants and juniors, especially when a room is shared by two classes." Small children require lots of activities, singing, games, dramatic work, and so on. But these all make for noise and movement and must, therefore, be continually restricted. Even in schools with glass partitions the powerful voice of an individual teacher can be exceedingly disconcerting to the pupils and teacher in the next room. In an old grammar school like that at Donington difficulties are legion. An absence of corridors means that every form proceeding to a new class-room must pass through, at least, one other room. The effect of children wandering through a room after a lesson has begun because they have forgotten books or have come late from the previous lesson, is both harmful to concentration and to discipline, apart from the disturbing

effect on the teacher himself.

Further imperfections in the buildings could be multiplied. Very often the porch is the only cloakroom and has to serve the whole school, and where a cloakroom is provided, it is much too small especially when, as in the secondary school, it must serve as a changing room when the children go into the gymnasium or to games. Articles of clothing and footwear are easily lost in the inevitable congestion, and the unfortunate sufferers get into trouble at home. The child thus is inclined to harbour a secret grudge against the school, which he considers is responsible for his misfortunes.

Numerous teachers have complained of the heating facilities in the school[1]. "On some days in winter," said one, "it is impossible to do any work. It is too bitterly cold." A Headmistress reports: "The rooms are never warm enough in winter, and parents frequently complain but we are absolutely helpless. Nothing is ever done in the matter." Another teacher laments that in summer the school is stuffy because of the wretched

---

1. There is no central heating in Holland elementary schools.

ventilation and the children unresponsive and drowsy in consequence, while in winter, its dampness and draughtiness give rise to innumerable coughs and colds.

Sanitary conditions, in the words of a Headmaster, are "simply shocking". Five years ago only one school in Holland had water closets[1], and though conditions have improved since then there is yet a crying need for further improvement. "Indescribably bad" is the verdict of one particularly disgruntled teacher on the sanitary arrangements, and he refers to the wretched, unhealthy atmosphere after the school has been closed for some time. "How can we," is the universal complaint, "teach hygiene and habits of cleanliness in conditions such as these?" The Medical Officer of Health himself reports: "The washing and sanitary arrangements, in many cases, are antiquated."[2] In one school, the writer observed that three small basins fed from one tap were expected to serve 200 children and this, moreover, is not exceptional. As far as towels, a school medical officer confessed that he shuddered every time he entered a school and caught a glimpse of the damp rag which served as "the towel". A sign of better times

---

1. Information supplied by the Medical Officer of Health.
2. See Report for 1937, p.6.

was the institution in 1937, in several senior schools, of separate paper towels for each pupil. "It is hoped," reports the School Medical Officer[1], "that this practice will eventually be extended to all schools and lead not only to a reduction in impetiginous skin conditions, but a general raising of cleanliness among the children."

In a scattered area like the Fen, comparatively few children live near the school and consequently in bad weather, many arrive with wet clothes and damp footwear. There are no adequate drying facilities whatever. In some schools the children fend for themselves and as often as not, this means that they just sit in their damp clothing and let it dry on them during the course of the day. Elsewhere, teachers do their best with the limited means at their disposal and dry the wet clothing in the classroom. This gives rise to a warm, damp atmosphere, conducive neither to the good health of the child nor to his receiving the maximum benefit from the teaching imparted. "Many parents," says one teacher, "blame the school for the constant colds from which their children suffer, though they realise that the teacher is not to

---

1. See Report for 1937, p.6.

blame."

Playgrounds vary greatly from school to school. Often with regard to size they fall far below the Board's recommendation of 20 square feet per child. To quote a particular case, one school has an area of 1,300 square feet for 120 girls. The writer was informed that on numerous occasions in winter the state of the playground was deplorable. The following are a few extracts from reports:-

"In bad weather the playground is an absolute quagmire."

"Often the playground is in such a bad state that it is unsuitable for anything."

"The physical exercises period has to be cancelled again and again because of the unsatisfactory state of the playground."

"For years now I have asked for something to be done to the school-playground."

It is particularly unfortunate when the playground is in such a wretched state that boys are deprived of an outlet for their high spirits, for conduct in school is bound

to suffer. Some schools, the writer observed, appeared to be fairly well drained but their loose or rough surfaces were entirely unsuitable for physical exercises.

Virulent criticism of the School Managers was frequently made by Headmasters, who charged them with being unsympathetic and ignorant of the real needs of the school. "The majority of my Managers," says one, "are farmers, and an ignorant and uneducated lot they are!" Another feels very bitter. "I am tired of asking my Managers for certain very necessary improvements and alterations. They consider the teacher is very well off as it is, and refuse to do anything in the matter." The writer himself had the opportunity of scanning the minutes of certain Managers' meetings, and found that proposals for essential repairs and alterations had been shelved time and time again. In one school, panes of glass had been missing for months, but the Managers could not be persuaded to do anything. There were occasions when they even proved decidedly antagonistic to the requests of teachers for equipment which would help to raise the standard of the teaching and develop the children's interests. In fairness it must, of course, be admitted that there are schools where Head

Teachers are keenly supported by the Managers and any shortcomings are due to lack of funds.

Perhaps one of the bitterest complaints among Headmasters is the use of the school buildings for social purposes. Of late years it has become more fully realised that the general appearance of a school constitutes an important factor in a child's training. But what incentive is there, say the teachers, to devote time and labour towards this end when pictures, exhibits, and other aids to teaching have all to be moved out of the classrooms whenever a dance is held in the evening? A Headmaster writes: "Every morning after one of these affairs [i.e., a dance] the whole school reeks with the stench of beer and spirits and stale tobacco smoke. What respect can my children have for a school which is no more than a common public-house!"

We can have much sympathy for this attitude, as such a state of affairs does tend to engender a lack of respect towards the school as a vital educative factor in the village. On the other hand, as an Inspector pointed out when the writer discussed the matter with him, is the inference that the villagers should simply do without their

social recreation when no other accommodation is available? His suggestion was that a committee should be set up to ensure that the building is properly used. The Headmaster must be a member of this committee and have the power to veto on reasonable grounds the granting of permission to use the school in the evenings. This scheme would be at least an improvement on the present position, where the Managers keep the whole business in their own hands and often ignore the wishes of the Headmaster.

Internal equipment in the schools is poor, which is only to be expected when one considers that the average cost per pupil is one hundred and twenty-six shillings and twopence, according to the Board of Education's statistics[1]. This is the lowest figure for any County area in England and Wales. For books and equipment, Head Teachers are annually allowed four shillings per child and three shillings in the case of infants. That such niggardly allowances are a grave handicap to effective teaching is obvious and teachers are faced with a very stiff task.

---

1. See List 46. Board of Education.

Exactly what part of the four shillings is spent on books it is impossible to say, as the Authority does not show this as a separate item in its Returns. But Head Teachers have assured the writer that their requisitions are so thoroughly scrutinised that they can never get as much as they want. Old copies of out-of-date books must be persevered with and the question of expense debars them from obtaining first-class reading matter. Yet it is the Fen child who, in this respect, should be stinted least of all. He needs books, and good books, which will appeal to his curiosity and imagination and introduce him to a world beyond that of his village or farm. Books are essential to rouse the Fen child's very dormant imagination, to convey inspiration and to develop the habit of clear and logical thought. Only by patient effort on the part of the teacher have a few schools acquired the semblance of a library, yet surely there is every need for children of this type to see lots of books collected together and to be able to discover for themselves the particular book which will best suit their purpose.

The writer's sentiments and those of all teachers in the Fen schools can best be summed up in a paragraph taken

from the Report[1] on "Books in Public Elementary Schools":

"During the present generation two facts have emerged which are of profound significance, and to which educational methods have hardly, as yet, adjusted themselves. They are the almost universal ability to read, and the prodigious and continuous increase in the matter that can be read. Men's minds are not formed to-day so commonly as in the past by the spoken word and oral tradition, or by regular converse with the few great books, such as the Bible and Pilgrim's Progress, which supplied food to the imagination, and colour to the idiom, of generations of Englishmen. They are played upon by an unceasing torrent of printed words, and sometimes it seems that they are in danger of being swamped by it. If the rising generation is to keep its head clear and its taste unspoiled - if it is to recognise a fact when it sees it and distinguish fact from fiction, or to acquire a just and sensitive feeling for what is admirable in thought and expression, it must form the habit of intelligen reading while still it is at school. The substance of our plea can be stated in a sentence. It is that the

---

1. Board of Education Report, p.xxi.

schools should be supplied with more books, and better books, for the children to read."

Desks are another problem. Several schools are still burdened with antiquated constructions highly unsuitable, particularly from a postural point of view. The old "long type" can be seen in some infant departments and teachers give fervent expression to the wish that all their desks could be made into a pile and burnt. These old constructions are a particular encumbrance in the infant and junior departments, where it is rather important that the maximum amount of floor space should be available for activities. Hundreds of new desks have, it is true, been supplied in the last few years, but the kindergarten department has not greatly benefited. This assumption is based on teachers' reports, as definite figures are not available. The following table[1], however, shows the position between 1927 and 1933.

---

1. Report of School Medical Officer, 1933, p.8.

Year	New Desks	Kindergarten	
		Tables	Chairs
1927	90	40	40
1928	61	52	104
1929	125	Nil	Nil
1930	336	Nil	6
1931	270	Nil	Nil
1932	171	Nil	Nil
1933	274	Nil	6

Small children are occupied a considerable part of their time with handwork, and equipment cannot be too abundant. Yet owing to the meagre allowance which is granted to the infant teacher, much depends on private enterprise and on the personal enthusiasm of the teacher. Here is the testimony of a certain Headmistress: "The outside world knows little of the sacrifices made by the infant teacher on behalf of her charges. I know examples of teachers who have repeatedly gone to considerable expense to obtain materials for their class-room work knowing, as they do, that the School will never provide them."

In some schools, the absence of the piano and sewing-machine is a great loss. Unfortunately, a peculiar arrangement exists with regard to the provision of equipment of this kind. The County Authority provide a third of the cost and the provision of the rest devolves on the Head Teacher, who is expected to organise concerts and sales of work to obtain the necessary funds. But the really sore point with the teaching staff is, however, that finally the Authority claim the equipment as its own property. Feeling is so strong on this point that some Head Teachers simply refuse to take any steps in the matter.

Probably the most serious difficulties are connected with the "practical" subjects - Woodwork, Gardening and Domestic Science. Accommodation is poor and difficult to obtain and with Domestic Science in particular, the total expense per pupil in a scattered area like this is high. Teachers complain that they can't get some of the most essential equipment and in some schools the subject has had to be abandoned on this account.

In an agricultural and de-rated area like Holland financial resources, it is true, are not plentiful. But the niggardly policy of the Authority towards schools and equipment leaves the children themselves the sufferers.

They lack so many of the opportunities given to children in more progressive areas that the outcome must necessarily be severe mental under-nourishment. The best school buildings are necessary to cultivate their poor sense of the aesthetic and to provide worthy examples of what is meant by cleanliness and hygiene; well-qualified teachers to stir the sluggish mind and the dormant imagination; and a plentiful supply of equipment to develop many of their undoubted practical gifts. All these are lacking, and the writer affirms with conviction that the Fen child to-day, denied his chance, leaves school at the age of fourteen under-educated, under-stimulated, and under-developed. Until a new generation takes up a vastly different attitude towards education, change will only come very slowly.

VI.

THE CURRICULUM

From the writer's own visits and from discussions with His Majesty's Inspectors, there seems little to distinguish the curriculum of most Fen schools from that found in any urban area. Examples there are of work on the part of enthusiastic teachers who have endeavoured, with varying success, to relate their teaching to the child's environment and personal experience. These, however, are thrust into prominence simply because they are, in effect, of such rare occurrence. In one school, to take a particular instance, a local history has been compiled. The project involved many activities: the study of parish registers and old records; the recording of names of old houses, farms, landmarks and so on; the study and drawing of church architecture; the making of maps and charts; the examination of local occupations.

So keen did the children become that numbers volunteered for work after school and during the holidays. The teacher in charge of the scheme felt that it had proved a valuable training and stimulated a much keener interest in local conditions and affairs.

In another school, the Head Teacher has broken away from the general elementary science course consisting mainly of plant and animal studies, and has attempted something more conducive to enquiry and observation. With the aid of home-made apparatus, an excellent scheme of soil analysis has been put into practice, and the full development of the scheme has only been arrested by the impossibility of obtaining necessary apparatus. One Headmaster, until a short while ago, utilised the school garden for bulb cultivation and the children were taught to observe and account for the causes and conditions of health or disease in bulbs and plants. In these activities the assistance of the Kirton Argicultural Institute was enlisted.

But these particular examples stand out simply because the majority of schools have neglected the rich opportunities of framing syllabuses intimately bound up with the world outside the school. Even Gardening, a subject one naturally expects in a rural area, is comparatively neglected. Actually, only 17 schools out of a possible 66 take Gardening[1], the greatest obstacles to the extension of the subject being the high price of land and the difficulty

---

1. Information supplied by the Director of Education.

of obtaining suitable ground. The Local Authority does not, as in some areas, employ any instructors who visit school gardens, help teachers, and give advice. The success of the school garden, therefore, lies very much in the hands of the Head Teacher. Most of those which the writer examined appeared to be little more than allotments, and there is apparently no attempt to cultivate an understanding of the common gardening processes in relation to soil and climate or of the principles underlying these processes.

For some years now the curriculum of country schools in general has received considerable attention, the general opinion being that the education is too academic and that the teaching should be more closely related to the rural environment. Employers and farmers with whom the writer has discussed the problem have been particularly insistent on the latter point. The common accusation is that in an area where opportunities of employment on the land are so plentiful, the schools tend to develop a "clerkly" type of education and if anything, to discourage land work.

This feeling is general, for the mind of the Fenman is fundamentally practical; they have little use for the cultural subjects. After all, their standards of value in life are those of the business man and the measure of

success is success that can be measured by the size of a man's bank balance or the extent of his acres. Can it be wondered at, when we see in the Fens examples of men who have gained wealth and position and who, even to this day, can barely compose a simple letter? The suggestion that school should be a training for life has no meaning for them in its broader aspect. Their conception of a training for life is a training for life's work, which here means a training for land-work.

In this attitude there is obviously much that can be criticised. The school is not primarily a forcing-ground for land-workers. Every child must have the opportunity to take up that career which is most suited to its peculiar characteristics and accomplishments. Education must be more than a preparation for a vacation. The child is expected to leave school with its mind awake, with an understanding of the right use of leisure and with a desire to extend the knowledge which he has gained. On the other hand, there is the danger that the school may help to create an urbanised and urban-minded population. The Fenman's grudge against the academic nature of the curriculum must be borne in mind, for it cannot be denied that here, where agriculture is as prosperous as in any

other part of the country, so little is done to link the school activities of the child with his environment.

It is not suggested for one moment that any rural bias should be given a true vocational complexion. In December, 1926, the following sentiments were expressed in "The English Landworker", the organ of the National Union of Agricultural Workers of England and Wales.

> "We should be entirely opposed to what is called agricultural bias in education, that is, education which aims at making boys specially fitted for farm work only. If we allow such education it means that the boys are not fitted to take up other work if they wish to and they are not so well-informed on general subjects as those from the towns."

In 1929 the Union again gave voice to its convictions.

> "We are entirely opposed to giving an agricultural bias to the teaching of young children. We are utterly opposed to directing the education of village boys and girls consciously towards providing future workers on the land."

Other critics ask, why should the country child be

educated to go on the land? He deserves with the town child an equal opportunity of earning a decent living with which, as often as not, agriculture simply cannot provide him. From the economic stand-point it is all to the advantage of the farmer to recruit cheap labour. But we cannot, they say, allow the child to go blindly into an occupation which holds no prospects for him. The unsavoury history of the agricultural labourer and the highly unsatisfactory nature of his position to-day speak for themselves.

Two answers to this argument are possible. First, the rural bias does not mean that the child is to be earmarked for an agricultural life and that he or she is to be prepared practically for it. The Board of Education considers that elementary schools should not teach "agriculture", but that a general education should be given based on environment and intimately related to rural conditions of life. Secondly, there is no suggestion of any agricultural "depression" in Holland, and it is an important point to consider that the condition of the labourer is as good as can be found anywhere.

What then must the Fen elementary school teach?

Certainly there must be no following the example of Dotheboys Hall where "spell dairy, now go and clean it" is considered practical education and where the chief aim seems to be to "teach girls to milk and boys to plough", though this would be in sympathy with the ideas of some of the more narrow-minded of the farming community. Rather than any specific vocational training, environment must be freely drawn upon in order to lend reality to the teaching and to arouse interest in country life and pursuits. What is wanted is a general education that will at once be practical and render the Fen child "in sympathy with his present and future environment."

Experiments on these lines are related in the Board's pamphlet "Rural Education" and a syllabus was issued in 1927 by the Hertfordshire County Council suggesting ways in which a rural bias can be given to ordinary school subjects. In Holland, as in other rural areas, the special circumstances of any school will have to be considered before any decisions are taken as to the rural bias. What, then, it may be finally asked, is the future of the minority of Holland children who do not take up occupations connected with the land? Will the curriculum prove equally suitable to their needs? The only reply seems to be this: As it is

impossible for every child to have an individual curriculum, a balance must be struck somewhere and the prevailing needs considered. In the final estimate, "The country lad may have already made up his mind to work in a town but none the less the life of the fields, the animals and flowers, the farm machinery, the weather, are the natural roads by which he will travel to a wider education."[1]

Some consideration must now be given to the curriculum of the secondary school. There is a total of six such schools in the County, but two only are rural, Moulton Boy's' Grammar School[2], which is shortly to be closed, and Donington Mixed Grammar School, both being endowed schools. The latter has three classes of entry. The Governors' Special Places are competitive and open to elementary schools in the County. These pupils form roughly a third of the school entry. The remaining two-thirds are made up of fee payers, some of whom may enter free, but whose parents must submit to a Means Test. Though the latter group is

---

1. What Should Country Children Learn? Times Educ. Supplement, 19th February 1938.

2. See Appendix "C".

expected to pass a simple examination in English and Arithmetic as a condition of entry, the standard accepted is ridiculously low. Even in the competitive examination no more than a moderate standard is expected. Thus we may say that about a third of the school are average children with a sprinkling of a really brighter element, while the remainder are much duller. The results of the Shepherd Dawson intelligence tests given to the first three "B" side forms at Donington Grammar School indicate the low academic standard of a considerable proportion of the school.

FORM IIB. TEST TAKEN ON 9th FEBRUARY 1938

Name	Age	Mental Age
B. Abbott	11.10	11.9
J. Armstrong	12.6	9.2
A. Burton	12.4	10.4
R. Casswell	12.4	10.7
M. Carter	12.0	11.7
J. Cope	10.5	10.9
D. Crampton	12.1	12.3
A. Craven	13.8	11.5
D. Dally	11.10	10.7
D. Fillingham	13.0	10.0
O. Greenfield	10.11	12.8
D. Hardy	13.8	10.7
S. Haresign	10.9	10.10
D. Hempsall	11.1	11.7
V. Mumby	12.3	12.11
B. Robinson	12.8	12.5
K. Thorpe	12.8	9.8
R. Thorpe	12.8	13.1
P. Webster	11.9	10.0
J. Wright	11.4	12.8

FORM IIIB. TEST TAKEN ON 23rd FEBRUARY 1938

Name	Age	Mental Age
P. Barton	12.7	12.4
M. Bendall	14.3	9.6
J. Booth	13.6	13.3
E. Carrott	14.6	11.11
H. Casswell	14.2	13.7
V. Clifton	12.3	10.0
K. Crampton	14.6	13.8
D. Dawson	10.8	12.1
L. Dobney	13.1	11.4
H. Enderby	13.7	12.7
M. Faulkner	13.1	12.1
K. Fisher	12.11	11.1
F. Gedney	13.3	12.9
E. Green	13.7	12.9
G. Maplethorpe	12.11	12.8
A. Rhodes	14.4	12.5
W. Sharman	13.10	12.3
E. Summerfield	13.7	12.5
L. Woodthorpe	13.3	13.5

FORM RB. TEST TAKEN ON 8th FEBRUARY 1938

Name	Age	Mental Age
G. Baker	13.11	13.0
H. Bettger	14.7	11.8
D. Bristow	14.6	13.11
F. Chapman	16.3	12.9
B. Clark	13.2	14.6
P. Clarke	14.1	11.8
R. Craven	15.2	12.11
D. Creasey	12.9	13.3
R. Drinkall	14.2	13.3
J. Firth	13.1	13.4
C. Gedney	15.2	13.0
P. Lenton	13.6	13.5
J. Pocklington	14.11	12.3
G. Rawlins	13.7	12.1
J. Thorley	13.0	12.1

Nevertheless, apart from the Botany course, the curriculum of the school might be that of any town secondary school. From the child's first day in school, his future is moulded by the dictates of the School Certificate Examination. Almost half the children are, therefore, forced into a course which is far above their intellectual attainments. Actually the figures below[1] show that only a minority ever reach the School Certificate stage.

Total number of pupils considered ...	824
Number of pupils who have taken School Certificate	156
Number of successes	133
Number of failures	23
Percentage of total pupils with School Certificate	16

The "B" side child, therefore, in particular, struggling to master theories and principles which lie far beyond his mental grasp, cannot but feel that the school is something of an island cut off from the realities of life and whose teaching has for him little or no meaning. In short, the pupil is adjusted to the curriculum rather than the curriculum to the needs and abilities of the pupil, and opportunities

---

1. Compiled from all available records in the Grammar School.

of developing an enquiring and critical turn of mind are completely lost.

Much of what has been said of the elementary school applies also to the Grammar School. Full advantage should be taken of the opportunities afforded by rural environment in framing syllabuses. The Spens Report urges that wherever possible arrangements should be made for the provision of and maintenance of a school garden and of land for livestock; that attention should be directed to land survey and calculation based on the work of the farm; that Craft Training should be similar to that given in urban schools; and that Domestic Science should include training in the utilisation and preservation of farm and garden produce. Further, the Report makes provision for the establishment on a regional basis of Grammar Schools with an "agricultural bias".

In view of the large numbers of children from the Holland rural secondary schools who go on the land, and eventually take up a rural life, it is fairly evident that a curriculum re-organised on these lines would react favourably on the whole work of the school. Children will always work best when they are interested in their job and a great deficiency in the interest element is at present

painfully evident. Consider, too, the position of the Fen girl, which demands particular attention, because her future work is so important and so complex that special training is almost as great a necessity in her case as in that of her brother. Little attention seems to be devoted to her place in the scheme of things, possibly due to the fact that the majority of girls do not, as a general rule, consciously take up a career as is the case with the boys, and do not thereby attract the same measure of public attention. Many take up some form of land work when they leave school and many more remain at home. In a few years they acquire husbands, 90% of whom will earn their living on the land. Consider the figures[1] relating to school-leavers from Donington Grammar School in the last forty-five years.

Occupation	Number
Domestic Duties	217
Teachers	69
Clerks	25
Nurses	15
Governesses	15
Milliners	13

1. Compiled from school records.

115 of those 217 taking up domestic duties went back to their own farms. Nowhere more than in agriculture is there such a close and intimate association of women with the menfolk in their work. And probably in no other rural area do the women take such an active share in the management of the farm than they do in the Fen. There are two reasons for this. First, because land is so expensive that in the case of the smallholder in particular, everyone in the household must play his part in the struggle of wresting from the soil sufficient to cover the capital outlay. Secondly, the Fenman is a business man to his finger tips and never lets slip the smallest opportunity of gaining profit. As one Headmaster declares: "They are always on the make". The farmer's wife, apart from other work, will often manage "side-lines" of her own such as the care of young stock or the rearing of poultry. The wife of the agricultural labourer will either work herself on the land, or will assist her husband with the garden and poultry. But the wife or daughter of a smallholder holds a position of even greater responsibility. She usually undertakes a multiplicity of jobs, which may include anything from taking produce to market to singling beet-sugar in the fields. This, of course, is entirely

in addition to a great variety of household duties - cooking, cleaning, dressmaking, and so on. The smallholder works on such a narrow margin of profit that domestic help cannot generally be afforded. Enough has been said to emphasise the fact that the future position of the girls of this area is one which will demand considerable adaptability, definite skill in certain directions, specialised knowledge, and a sense of responsibility. It is the duty of the school to fit her for the important position she will occupy in the community.

In conclusion, a word must be said on the danger of over-emphasis of any proposed rural bias. The Spens Report affirms that "the school should help every boy and girl to achieve the highest degree of individual development of which he or she is capable." If it is necessary, therefore, to train the observation and develop practical skill, it is also necessary to train the imagination. In view of the narrow outlook and limited experience of the Fen child no opportunity should be missed of introducing him to a world greater than his own. Only by such means can we hope that he will "leave school with his mind awake and his appetite for learning whetted by the foretaste of

knowledge which he has had."[1]

---

1. Board of Education: Suggestions to Teachers.

VII.

CONTINUED EDUCATION

Scant attention has as yet been paid in this area, to the intellectual needs of the child after the school-leaving age has been passed. The prevalent opinion of persons having influence with local authorities is that the child learns more by practical experience than by attendance at evening classes. No express desire for evening instruction for the adolescent has ever come from parents, which is, of course, what might be expected in an area where so little store is set by education. A further discouragement to those interested is the usual reluctance on the part of the authorities to increase in any way the education bill.

The two chief centres for Evening Classes are at Boston and Spalding. Two smaller rural ones are situated at Butterwick and Crowland. Below is set out the typical courses in each case[1]:-

Spalding

Book-keeping Course.	Shorthand-Typist's Course.
Domestic Course.	Industrial Course.

---

1. Prospectus of Evening Education. Holland County Council.

Boston

Book-keeping Course.	Shorthand-Typist's Course.
Electrical Engineering.	Mechanical Engineering.
Building Course.	Other subjects (including Carpentry, Dressmaking, Cookery).

Butterwick

Shorthand.	Typewriting.
English.	Dressmaking.
Arithmetic.	Keep Fit.
Book-keeping.	

Crowland

English.	Woodwork.
Arithmetic.	Cookery.
Shorthand.	

The Crowland Centre has now been in operation for three years and has 40 students enrolled, the majority between the ages of 14-18. This is the second year of the Butterwick experiment. The school has a roll of 30 students - 25 under the age of 18[1]. Apart then from those children attending Boston and Spalding from surrounding villages, rural Holland has thus a mere 65 juveniles pursuing continued

---

1. Information given by the respective Headmasters.

education - a shocking state of affairs. The Headmasters of both schools have experienced similar difficulties. Interest is difficult to arouse, for as there is no agricultural ladder, the labourer has no motive. But the greatest drawback is the absolute unattractiveness of the courses offered to the rural worker. To devise a course of real interest and value in agriculture and horticulture would necessitate proper premises and equipment and these the Authority is by no means willing to supply.

It will be fairly obvious that the Courses are distinctly urban in character and apart from the Cookery and Woodwork, there is little to attract the rural dweller. The writer decided to make enquiries among responsible persons in the area to ascertain whether there was any demand whatever for village centres, and what likelihood there was of coping with it. In many cases the replies given to questions asked were very similar.

"There is some demand here for Cookery classes but it has been found impossible to obtain a teacher."

"Evening classes of the right kind would be a great blessing. They would be of particular value to the adolescent, as in winter there is nothing to occupy his leisure. But the classes must be definitely planned

for this type of person."

"If people felt they were going to be interested they would attend."

"Some young people would go to the classes for the sake of something to do if for nothing else."

One teacher affirmed that the greatest obstacle to the foundation of evening-class work were the farmers. They distrusted education and feared that it was tending to drive the labourer off the land. A certain farmer informed the writer that already, in his opinion, children were being over-educated. "When they leave school," he says, "they no longer want to start in the same way as their fathers did. They're all out for something with more pay and better hours." Yet if farming in this country is to hold its own there must be a higher standard of intelligence of both farmer and labourer. More scientific methods are inevitable if the aim is greater productivity at lower costs.

The absence of any proper scheme of continued education reacts most unfavourably on the adolescent. The boy who leaves the village school at 14 or even 16, passes through a difficult stage. He feels himself in a new world, a world full of new experiences and new situations. The stage when he was forced to learn cumbersome loads of useless information

has passed and he realises that what he does now affects him far more intimately than anything else in his previous experience. He realises, too, that he has put away childish things and is eager to bask in all the glory of his new position among the village folk. This is the very time then when he should make contacts outside the family circle, when he should be brought to realise the significance of his work, and when nascent interests should be carefully cultivated. "The years 14-18 are the most receptive of intellectual impressions. Intellectual starvation between 14 and 18 is a great disability of modern society. Prolongation by several years on behalf of all classes of some form of whole-time education would be the most striking addition to the moral and intellectual well-being of nations in modern times."[1] Enough has been said to show the paucity of provision for further education in this area. It is suggested that definite vocational agricultural education after the age of 14 would prove one of the greatest steps forward in educational policy which could possibly be made by the authorities.

In such a policy, the most serious problems would be financial. Expenditure on agricultural education in England

---

1. Vocational Education in Agriculture, p.45. Series K.No.9. Intern. Labour Office.

varies within wide limits dependent on rateable value and population. On this basis, obviously an entirely unsatisfactory one, a county like Holland, almost purely agricultural and where the need for agricultural education is greatest, is placed at a great disadvantage. Consider a county like Durham with a high rateable value in relation to the numbers engaged in agriculture. There are many districts within its boundaries which are thickly populated, owing to the existence of large industrial areas. Durham has developed a scheme of agricultural education well above the average for the country and the sacrifice in terms of a 1d rate is small. In Holland, however, and similar areas, the product of a 1d rate is necessarily low and progress is only possible at heavy expense to the ratepayers. As an example, Holland must levy a rate of nearly 2d in the £1 to give as much help to its agricultural community as Leicester can give for $\frac{1}{3}$d rate and Northumberland for $\frac{1}{4}$d rate.

The following figures[1] will make the position more clear:-

---

1. Compiled from data supplied by the Principal of Kirton Institute.

County	No. engaged in agriculture	As % of total population	Local expenditure in terms of a 1d rate	Ministry grant	Grant per head engaged in agriculture
					s. d.
Northumberland	14,396	3·51	·25	£2,827	3. 11
Holland	17,289	18·11	2·06	£3,619	4. 10

So heavy is the burden on the country that little provision in the way of continued education can be made for adolescents. As far as scholarships go, the dearth of opportunities in this direction is clear from the records[1] of the last three years.

1936-7 3 applications for Scholarships under the Ministry of Agriculture received.

Awards - One Junior for winter course in agriculture. Taken by boy who had been working between the ages 14-16.

1937-8 5 applications for these Scholarships received.

Awards - One extended Junior for three terms agriculture. This boy was the same as above, i.e., awarded Junior last year.

1938-9 4 applications received.

Awards - Three Juniors for three terms horticulture. Two of these worked from 14-16. One girl left local High School to take up award.

County Scholarship - One awarded to enable a boy to take a degree course in agriculture - £50 per year for 2 years.

1. Compiled from data supplied by the Principal of Kirton Institute.

Another point arises here. Not until the right foundation is laid in the school can there be any expectation of enthusiasm for continued agricultural education. A striking illustration of the present apathy comes from Butterwick, a village a few miles from Boston. Some years ago, a certain Samuel Barnet left £500 in stock for an annual scholarship to an Agricultural College. In ten years there has been only a single applicant. The root of the trouble lies partly in the hostile attitude of the farming community to continued education in agriculture. The principle expressed is that the earlier a boy gets on with the practical work so much the better for him. In short, they are anxious to recruit land workers but they have no desire whatever that they should understand the principleson which their work is based.

The one previous experiment in connection with vocational agricultural education in Holland was, unfortunately, a failure. In 1926 at Kirton Agricultural Institute, a course was inaugurated for farmers' sons. The school began with 26 on the roll, mostly sons of well-to-do farmers. The following year numbers had dwindled to 12 and after a third year, the course was discontinued. The reasons given by the Principal for this discouraging beginning were primarily economic - the fact that only fairly wealthy farmers could afford the expense incurred and the numbers of this type in

Holland are limited. Secondly, there was a widespread lack of understanding of the necessity and value of such education.

Only by a radical alteration of the system under which agricultural education is administered in the country and by bringing about a change of attitude in the general community towards agricultural education, can we hope to see any improvement in the present situation. Unless there is a plentiful supply of scholarships and unless fees are low, little progress can be expected. As it is, the farm worker is unwilling to do without the labour of his sons, and from a financial point of view, to forgo his son's earnings, however small, is often an impossibility. Besides, the young farm worker feels little incentive for special training as he knows that without capital any progress in his profession is barred. Unfortunately, as long as his work is regarded as unskilled, farming employers are unable to recognise any tested degree of skill and the worker therefore has no motive to attain it. Perhaps as farm methods become more scientific, skill in agricultural manual processes may be studied as an independent problem and thus prove the need for systematic training to replace empiric experience.

The position of the smallholder is equally difficult. Family labour is an important factor in the working of the farm and the loss of his children would mean their replacement

by hired labour. To replace an adolescent by an adult is, however, an expensive process and it is a well-known fact that particularly in the Fens, the economy of the small farm often rests on the un-paid labour of the farmer's family. It has already been observed that children in this part of the world do an abnormal amount of work out of school and during holidays. The withdrawal of the children from school at the earliest possible opportunity proves that the parent has waited impatiently for the time when his children can become full-time workers on the farm.

Granted that the necessary financial expenditure is made possible, it is suggested that the teaching in continuation classes for boys of the age-group 14-16 should partly be a preparation for later vocational classes at the Farm Institute. The curriculum might include studies of plant life and animal life accompanied by suitable laboratory and field work, some work involving calculation, and appropriate geographical and historical work. The ultimate aim of these classes should be to develop the thinking capacity of the child, partly through a study of biological principles, and to inculcate a wide interest in rural surroundings.

Practical work wherever possible should be an important part of the curriculum and should include work in field, garden, and farm-yard. Experience has proved that at this

stage children can be very practically-minded and work of this type, apart from its own intrinsic value, will help to hold the interest of those less attracted by the theoretical side. A diet of theory alone has seldom proved to be mentally digestible to the average product of the rural elementary school, because his mental faculties have often been so insufficiently awakened, that he is totally unfit to appreciate even elementary theory.

Sufficient has been said of the Fen girl to make her situation clear. In view of her work and her position in the home, the writer urges that the following recommendations of the Denman Report[1] be adopted:-

(1) Organised courses (on the lines of the Day Courses for Farmers' Daughters in Derbyshire) of combined instruction in agricultural, domestic, and general subjects, should be provided by county authorities for girls 14-16.

(2) In order to facilitate organisation of such courses, records should be kept in the school of the employment entered on leaving.

(3) Additional scholarships should be available for these girls from itinerant to Farm Institute and/or other instruction, and from the latter to more advanced courses.

(4) Any possible assistance should be given to the Women's Institutes or kindred associations undertaking the work of organising girls into Junior Groups.

---

1. The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life, p.49. Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Women and girls in the Fens contribute largely to agricultural output, and as household managers are bound to exert considerable influence on their men-folk. The girl, once school is behind her, has an important part to play in the village community. It is felt, therefore, that continued education on the lines of the Denman Report would help the Fen girl to find life on the land more remunerative and more satisfying, and would equip her with the necessary training for her important position in the social organisation.

VIII.

RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES

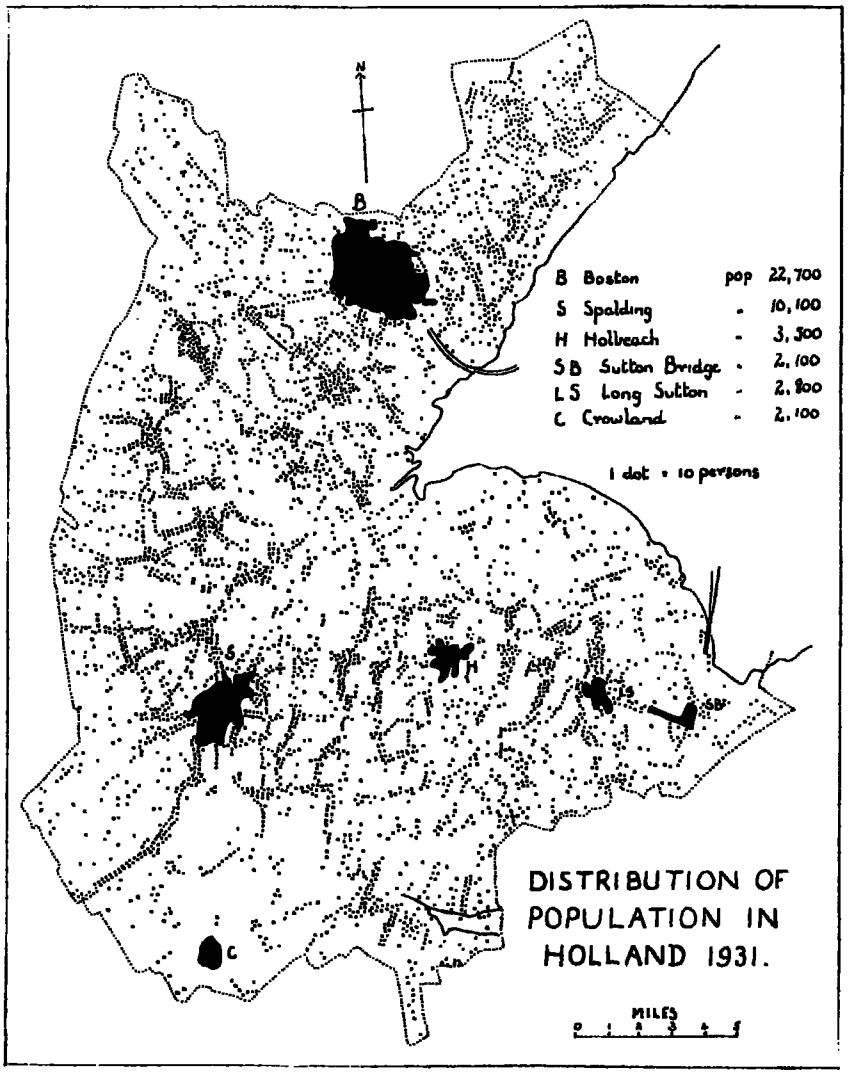
Enquiries into the provision for social recreation in the Fen reveal a deplorable dearth of facilities in this direction. Sports accommodation, clubs, societies, classes - all those movements which contribute so largely to the enrichment of village life, are lacking. Apart from the work of the Church and Chapel, there is complete neglect of the social interests of children and adolescents, as the following analysis[1] so clearly reveals.

(Number of Playing Fields	7	
(Number of Gymnasia	2	(Private)
Boys' Clubs	1	Membership 30
Girls' Clubs	2	" 35
Boy Scout Troops	5	" 112
Girl Guide Troops	10	" 232
Brownie Packs	1	" 25
Girls' Guilds	1	" 40
Girls' Friendly Societies	1	" 35

How can we account for such a marked discrepancy in social facilities? Enquiries in the village from the clergy and others reveal that the problem is many-sided.

---

1. From information given by the Secretary of the National Fitness Committee (Holland Division).


N
B
S
H
SB
LS
C
B Boston pop 22,700
S Spalding - 10,100
H Holbeach - 3,300
SB Sutton Bridge - 2,100
LS Long Sutton - 2,800
C Crowland - 2,100
1 dot = 10 persons
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN HOLLAND 1931.
MILES
0 1 2 3 4 5

One of the most severe difficulties is a lack of leaders. Leaders are scarce and not easy to find. In many villages it is difficult to find anyone sufficiently interested in the children to organise for them. One report says: "The Fen people lack initiative. In many cases when a leader is obtained, the person is an outsider." In villages with an undeveloped social life, the responsibility falls on the vicar or the village teachers. But the vicar is often quite the wrong type of person, and the teachers are too pre-occupied with other activities. "The teachers are expected to undertake all the social work in this village," says one teacher. "A boys' club is badly needed, but our hands are too full to do anything about it."

Distance, too, is a great handicap. Consider the distribution of population in the rural area as revealed by the following figures[1].

Rural Area	Acreage	Population per Acre
Spalding	87,758	.19
Boston	84,398	.22
East Elloe	84,597	.26

1. Report of Area Committee for National Fitness (Lincs.) Also see map opposite.

In some areas there are quite large tracts of fen and marsh country with few villages or even hamlets, and here we find cottages dotted about upon the farms, far away from each other and at a considerable distance from the main road and the school. Some of these cottages are often situated close to and facing out upon the wider dykes and drains which were once important waterways for the transport of produce. The advent of the railway has, of course, completely changed the situation and to-day agricultural workers and their families, who occupy many of the dwellings, are left in comparative isolation.

"This scattered population is a tremendous problem," says a vicar. "How can we expect children to walk or cycle anything up to two miles, particularly in winter, along dark and lonely roads? Would you like to do it yourself?" In truth, as far as the child who lives at a distance from the village is concerned, here is a difficulty which seems insuperable. Yet it is remarkable what physical discomforts the children will undergo if they are sufficiently attracted. The writer is convinced from his own experience of social work among the boys, that activities properly organised and conducted, will never lack support.

Unfortunately, in too many villages the whole question

of social recreation for the younger generation has never been treated with anything but apathy. How often has the writer heard the remark "It's no good starting anything here - it wouldn't 'go.'" The country does not, as a rule, produce many bold and adventurous spirits and the Fenman is cautious to a degree. New ideas and opinions are only gradually accepted in the village. Modern thought on the particular physical and mental needs of the growing child takes a long time to penetrate into the rural home, and the Fen people are staunchly conservative both in politics and in outlook. Anything in the way of innovations or new ideas is ipso facto to be regarded with suspicion. The old cry - what has been good enough for me ought to be good enough for you - seems to colour the outlook of many a parent.

In some villages where a more enterprising spirit is evident, progress is held up by lack of facilities. At least nine villages are in urgent need of new halls. Here is the situation in one of these villages as described by a resident. "We have only one hall here - very small and very old. Some of us would like to do something for the social life of the village, but we haven't the accommodation." Another writes: "We have one Hall here but another would be a great blessing. The old one is so much in use by adults

that it would be impossible to start any new activities." The scarcity of accommodation, and sometimes of the right kind of accommodation, is undoubtedly a real handicap. In some villages, the Church Hall is the only building available for social purposes, and there is a feeling that a public hall, unfettered by irksome restrictions, would be a great boon.

The few organisations which are active on behalf of the children, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, Scouts and Guides, are doing valuable work often in the face of considerable difficulties. A Scoutmaster gives the following report on his troop: "The troop is now pulling itself together but it has passed through many vagaries in the last few years. There has been no continuity of leadership and as could be expected, numbers dwindled. It is a great pity there are not more Scout Troops in the Fen for they offer a training in the very things these children lack - leadership, initiative, resourcefulness."

All the reports make some reference to the fact that the children are difficult to get hold of. When first brought into the "group", whatever it may be, they do not "mix" easily, and are shy and diffident. However, interest in the movement - Scouts, Guides or "Club" - quickly

develops, and they lose much of that self-consciousness. A tremendous onus, however, rests on the adult who is in charge, for the evidence seems to show that where the gifts of leadership are not strongly marked, the whole movement inevitably disintegrates.

The social work of both Church and Chapel calls for comment. The influence which the clergyman can exert on the village is unlimited, and the smaller the community the stronger his influence. He begins with a distinct advantage in that he controls the Church Hall, sometimes the only hall in the village. In most villages, Sunday Schools and Bible Classes are organised, but efforts beyond this are somewhat sporadic and vary widely from village to village. In one, boys meet in the Hall once a week where they play team games and have billiards, draughts, and other similar games placed at their disposal. In another, the girls have one night when they meet, bring their sewing, and take part in community singing. The extent and variety of the work depends almost completely on the energy, enthusiasm, and ability of the individual clergy.

But if it is the Church which leads the way in the larger village, it is in the more remote country areas where

the Chapel reigns supreme. In these parts, where attendance at Church would often have meant a walk of several miles, the Chapel seized its opportunities and in the early years, when the land was first being developed, erected there the first simple, wooden Chapel. The influence of the nonconformist minister may be less evident than that of the vicar yet it is nevertheless equally strong, though it will take time before the casual observer will realise the intense influence of the nonconformist society on its members, and their self-sacrificing loyalty to its welfare.

One of the most valuable of their institutions is the Guild. The Guild is held on four nights and includes both boys and girls. One night is devoted to recreation, games, singing, and so on; another to literature, when the children themselves give lecturettes and outsiders come and give talks. The other two nights are given up to a religious service and social service. The children, too, organise among themselves concerts and sketches and often present them at other chapels. All this provides the children with an excellent training and helps to break down the self-consciousness and reticence so common among Fen children. Moreover, the chapels, being self-supporting,

demand thrift, temperance, and self-sacrifice from the members, thus tending to create an independent and self-reliant spirit and faculty for leadership.

The most serious problem is that of catering for the adolescent, the fourteen to eighteen group. At fourteen, when the child leaves school, he takes on the mantle of independence and soon begins to feel the urge for companionship with the group of his own age and interests. The town affords ample satisfaction to this urge. Apart from anything else, the town child is always free to wander round with his own kind. In the village, it is different. Groups can only be collected together for some specific purpose, and consequently the desire for associating with others can only be satisfied through organised activity. If the child's interests and the mental activity which the school has created are to be extended and developed, they must have some encouragement.

The boy, in particular, at this stage becomes physically conscious. He is proud of his physical prowess, and keen to pit himself against others. Poor though its facilities may be[1], school has whetted his appetite for physical activity and encouraged his interest and delight in all forms of games. In all probability, during his last

---

1. Only seventeen schools have football pitches.

years at school the village football team has captured his imagination, and he is eager to emulate ~~their~~ its exploits.

Yet his prospects, as far as sport goes, are nothing less than drear. Football and cricket are played in most villages and even the tiniest village seems to be able to run a football club, but the boy just left school can seldom hope to gain a place in the team. Until he is eighteen his lack of strength and size preclude this. The formation of a Junior League would be an absolute salvation. Such a proposition has been mooted, but again the scarcity of grounds renders it an impossibility. As it is, there are only nineteen football pitches and fourteen cricket pitches altogether, and these are in full use by adults.

Girls are almost as badly off. There is a mere total of six hockey pitches in the whole area. Tennis is in a much better position with thirty-nine private courts and six public. There is a great deal of scope for the extension of the public courts, especially. The private clubs tend to attract only the better-class girl and there are heavy expenses entailed in the matter of subscriptions and dress. The public courts, on the other hand, are less formal, less expensive, and impose no feeling of social

inferiority.

Proper facilities for swimming are almost non-existent. There are two public baths and no school baths. On the other hand, there is probably no area in the country where swimming instruction is such a necessary part of education. Treacherous creeks on the coast, deep and hidden drains in the fen, and reed-strewn rivers in the marsh, abound everywhere. In view of the natural resources of the County in waterways, it is a matter of considerable regret that only one solitary school has taken advantage of the position. At a cost of £25 the Headmaster made a proper bathing place in the river which runs near the school, and now the whole school takes swimming instruction and the place has been thrown open to the general public. Unfortunately, this is only an isolated instance; yet the whole situation teems with possibilities.

There is a corresponding dearth of what might be called "cultural" activities, - musical societies, folk-dancing, dramatic societies and such like. These flourish to some extent in the market towns but the villages are left isolated. The writer believes that there is not a single choral or debating society throughout the whole of Holland. Indeed, the obvious under-development of any

aesthetic sense is a marked characteristic of the children. This is particularly evident in regard to music. One seldom hears Fen children even whistling, singing and humming in the fields or in the street. The musical standard in the schools is pathetically low, as almost every teacher will admit. In fact, so poor is their voice production that several voice the opinion that the Fen child is physiologically incapable of any higher standard. But as there are no solid grounds whatever for this belief, the more acceptable theory is that which attributes their inability to the cumulative effect of the great lack of cultural activities throughout the whole area.

Young Farmers' Clubs, an institution admirably suited to this type of child, are absolutely non-existent. Yet no other organisation so effectively helps to stimulate intelligent and sympathetic appreciation of every phase of rural life. The clubs provide a most effective training in farm practice and bring the adolescent into active contact with current agricultural problems. Boys and girls too, of varying social standing, are brought together by the common interest of club work. One is bound to feel these clubs could play a big part in such a rural community as Holland and indeed, their popularity in other rural areas

has fully proved the value of their work.

Denied an outlet for physical or mental energy, the adolescent in the Fen tends to stagnate. Nascent interests are stifled and the child passes through a very difficult period. Teachers themselves have observed the process. The Headmaster of one school said: "When the boys leave there is a tendency to become 'loutish'. They have nothing to occupy their leisure-time." "It is amazing," says one resident, "how the younger people seem to be able to stand for hours doing nothing." The adolescents are forced into the company of older people in whom the mental glow created by the school has probably long since disappeared. In the absence of any mental stimuli or opportunities of physical recreation, these children take on the same character as the older youth and girls of the village. Often when they reach eighteen and nineteen they show a marked improvement, but the long period of mental starvation after school is left behind is bound to leave its marks.

With girls the change after school comes a little easier. They mature more quickly than the boys, and are soon drawn to the village whist drives and dances which are by far the most numerous and most popular activities. Such

diversions may be better than nothing at all, but they are a poor substitute for what could be possible. With boys, as with girls, the cinema and the shallow attractions of the market town quickly become the focus of their thoughts, and the Saturday night visit the outstanding event of the week.

IX.

THE FUTURE

Any estimate of the future with regard to the Fen child and environment must devote serious consideration to the profound changes which proposed re-organisation under the Hadow Scheme is bound to bring about. The difficulties of the small school are well-known[1]. The older children can seldom be fully catered for, and there is considerable waste of time in the upper classes. Teachers cannot possibly deal adequately with several standards and the varied age-range causes many difficulties in grouping for team games and physical training. Moreover, handwork and crafts, woodwork and domestic science, are all very limited, the small school accommodation and the expense of equipment being prohibitive. To provide a sufficiently wide, varied, and practical programme of instruction for the older children is therefore impossible.

The greatest virtue of the new schools will thus lie in their capacity to provide a curriculum on a much broader basis. How far this curriculum will be related to environment

---

1. There are 31 "small" schools in Holland (i.e., with under 100 on the roll).

the writer is unable to forecast. But a propitious omen is the preparation of a scheme now in hand to enlist the co-operation of the Kirton Agricultural Institute in the work of the schools, which naturally leads one to believe that the future will see considerably more rural bias.

The new schools, too, will at last do something to fill the gap in what may be called the social education of the adolescent by bringing him into contact with more children of his own age, particularly necessary with the Fen child, and by making him part of a much wider organisation. Both the bright and the backward child will benefit, the former because of the scope for the full development of his abilities, and the latter because of the greater opportunities for practical work. With all, the school should lay the foundation both of intellectual and aesthetic interests which will bear their richest fruit after the school-leaving age.

The re-organisation will, it is hoped, bring considerable improvements in staffing. In this county, the proportion of uncertificated and supplementary teachers is high and the number of specially qualified assistants is correspondingly low[1]. Nothing can compare with the influence of the teacher

---

1. See Appendix "B".

in a child's education and the personal element is an all-important factor in the school. How great then is the need to ensure that the personnel of the school is up to standard in qualifications, character, and teaching ability. The supplementary and uncertificated assistants may have their use, and in many cases the uncertificated teacher is one who, in long years of service, has proved again and again her worth. But by employing these unskilled teachers the education of the child is bound to suffer in the long run. The new senior schools will be staffed by fully qualified people and, as experience has proved, will attract specially qualified teachers.

Probably the greatest drawback to the new schemes will be physical — the handicap imposed on the children through the greater distances to be travelled to school, and the possible loss of the hot mid-day meal. Already in some areas in Holland, parents are expressing their fears on these matters, for large numbers of children will certainly be unable to return home at mid-day. Apparently it is to be left to the individual schools to work out any schemes in connection with meals, but certainly if centralisation is to be the success, which it ought to be, provision of hot meals and facilities for drying clothing should on no account be

omitted.

Yet another danger is that the Junior School may be neglected. No grant from the Local Authority is available for modernising non-provided Junior Schools, and it may be that improvements in these schools in such essential matters as sanitation, light and heat, ventilation, and equipment, may come only very slowly. Even more serious is the possibility that the Authority may tend to economise on its Junior establishments by filling them with Supplementary and Uncertificated teachers. In any case, the younger and better qualified teachers are bound to gravitate towards the Senior School. In view of the fact that the children in the Junior School will come more directly under the personal influence of the Head Teacher and will have a better chance of attaining a higher standard in the essential subjects, it will be a matter of great regret if the personnel of these schools is unequal to its task.

As for the secondary school, the future is one of very mixed possibilities. In spite of the national feeling that the village, as a social unit, should be strengthened and every attempt made to deepen the appeal of the country, the very existence of rural secondary education in this area seems at stake. In a few months, Moulton Grammar School will close its doors and its pupils will be transferred to Spalding. If

the Board of Education acts on its contention that a secondary school with less than 250 pupils is uneconomical, then there seems a decided possibility that eventually the whole of secondary education in Holland will become urbanised. Should such an eventuality come to pass, it cannot but be admitted that a severe loss would be sustained. The child would, it is true, gain some advantage in the greater variety of courses which might lie open to him, but he would tend to lose that close and intimate connection with the countryside which it is the proper function of the rural school to maintain. If there is to be a determined movement to stem the tide of urbanisation, the school is necessarily one of the most powerful influences at our disposal.

On the other hand, if the proposals of the Spens Report are carried out in this area, there is no reason why the rural school should not enter on a new era, and create a profound change in the child's interest in his work and attitude to the school. The new school will, it is hoped, nurture that characteristic rural outlook of the Fen child and adapt itself to his or her special needs and capacities. The provision of suitable intellectual pabulum and practical activities will help to engender a greater respect for education, and encourage children to continue rural studies when they have left school.

Whether the necessary financial provision for continued education in agriculture, and whether the really successful rural evening school will be forthcoming in the near future, are matters of some speculation. As for the latter, only when the value of continued education is more fully realised and only when the authority decides to provide evening schools adapted to the conditions of the area, can we hope for a happier state of affairs. With regard to the former, the Ministry of Agriculture has, up to the present, completely ignored the great disparity in the provision made for agricultural education. The County Agricultural Organiser for Herefordshire suggests that the whole scheme should be placed on a new basis. Rateable value, he declares, is an approximate measure of the wealth of a county, and the number engaged in agriculture is a measure of the need so far as agricultural education is concerned. The latter divided into the former should provide a basis for the allocation of grants, and counties like Holland, where such a division would produce a low figure, should receive a proportionately higher grant from the Ministry.

Such a plan would lift agricultural education from its present parlous state to a position commensurate with the importance of agriculture in the county. But any change in the present position is not likely in the immediate future,

and it is to be regretted that the present dearth of opportunities in this direction is likely to continue for some time.

Turning our attention to the land itself, there is reason to believe that its great farming qualities, and the better conditions of employment compared with other areas, will continue to attract the majority of children. As farming methods improve and as the business of farming becomes more involved, in which process mechanisation will play its part, a higher standard of ability on the part of the farm-worker may be necessary, and the onus of turning out children with adaptability and a knowledge of the principles underlying their work, will rest with the school. It is doubtful, provided the state of agriculture does not deteriorate, whether the town will ever attract any great number of Fen children though the more academic type of child will always tend to migrate there. The extension of the canning industry may, it is true, absorb more girls, but the type of agriculture in this area remaining in its present state, large numbers are bound to take up land work, especially as the demand is increasing with the expansion of the dry bulb trade[1].

---

1. See p. 22

A definite effort is at last being made to improve housing conditions. During the last three years ending the 31st December, 1937, 206 new dwellings had been built for the agricultural worker to replace those scheduled under the Slum Clearance and Overcrowding Surveys. The following position on the 31st December, 1937, is given by the County Medical Officer of Health[1].

Housing (Rural Workers) Acts[2].

No. of dwellings in respect of which applications for grants or loans have been			Assistance promised by the Council	Assistance given by the Council	No. of dwellings on which work has been	
Made to Council	Refused the by Council	Withdrawn	Total amount grants or loans promised	Grants paid or loans advanced	Finished	Commenced
38	3	2	£1,946-13-4	£426-13-4	6	13

Housing Act, 1930.

Authority	Erected by Council	Erected by Private Enterpris
Boston R.D.C.	32	111
Spalding R.D.C.	56	65
East Elloe R.D.C.	11	69

1. See p.30. of Report
2. See Appendix "D"

Sufficient has been said on the home as an environmental factor to indicate how the provision of decent dwellings is bound to affect the child. As conditions improve, the reaction on the child's health and mental and aesthetic development cannot but show itself, and the danger that as a higher standard of education is attained, disgust with home conditions might drive young people to the towns, will be permanently warded off.

Again, the decrease in the practice of married women working on the land, of which there are certain signs, will tend to promote a richer home environment, which is seldom possible when both parents are out all day. The returns[1] for June 4th, 1938, show a drop of 318 in the regular workers among women and girls, and a drop of 342 among the casual workers. The improving economic position of the labourer which, the writer understands, is one of the causes for the decrease in the number of married women workers, will materially affect the welfare of the children generally.

The children, too, will ultimately reap the benefits of the education of at least one of their parents through the Women's Institutes. The work of this excellent organisation

---

1. Returns of Ministry of Agriculture.

touches on every aspect of environment, education, agricultural conditions, rural domestic economy, and many others. Perhaps the best means of providing some insight into its influence is by quoting from the resolutions of various branches[1].

"That this meeting directs the attention of all Institute members to the importance of the Young Farmers' Club movement as a valuable form of agricultural education and social training for boys and girls and as a means of increasing food production."

"That this meeting recommends the N.F.W.I. Executive Committee to represent to the Government the great need for the continuance and development of adult education in rural districts."

"That this meeting, realizing the importance of education in national life, urges Women's Institutes to study the proposals for school re-organization in their own areas. In the case of children remaining at school until fifteen, it is urged that in the last two years of their school life the girls should receive instruction in domestic subjects and in the case of boys special training should be given with regard to their future

---

1. See Public Questions, N.F.W.I.

employment."

"That the N.F.W.I. should use its influence for obtaining due recognition of the importance of training in home management for all girls."

"That this meeting draws the attention of the Women's Institutes to the recently published report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education on 'The Health of the School Child', from which it appears that in certain areas the health of the rural child has not progressed at the same rate as that of the urban child; further, this meeting would urge the Institutes to give their special attention to the suggestion contained in the report that Women's Institute members may be of practical help in the matter."

"That the provision of a sufficient supply of convenient and sanitary houses being of vital importance to women in the country, County Federations and Women's Institutes are urged to bring pressure to bear upon their local Councils and, through the National Federation, upon the Local Government Board to ensure that full advantage is taken in their districts of the Government scheme for State-aided Housing."

The spread of the Women's Institutes is significant of

the awakening sense of responsibility and greater social adaptability of rural women. In Holland there are now 32 Institutes[1] which promote classes in cookery, folk-dancing, rural domestic economy, and discussions on citizenship, education, housing and many other topics. Lectures are given on ways in which the greatest benefit to the health of the family can be obtained on the most economical budget, and practical instruction on home management. The outcome cannot be otherwise than a deeper understanding of the problems which their children must face, together with the best means of providing for their special needs, and a realisation of their responsibility to the community in which they live.

Contributing to the cultural development of the Fen people will undoubtedly be the spread of the County Libraries. The children will benefit both directly from their own use of the libraries, and indirectly from the broader outlook which it is hoped their parents will acquire. The County Library Scheme was inaugurated in Holland on April 1st, 1937 and 63 centres are now in operation. Up to the end of September, 1938, the total number of books circulated to readers was 191,281[2]. The inculcation of the

---

1. Information supplied by the Sec., N.F.W.I.

2. Information given by the County Librarian

reading habit should do much towards destroying that sheer unacquaintance with books which at present is so characteristic of the area, and should be instrumental in the production of a more thinking and more enlightened generation.

As with the child's intellectual needs, so with his physical needs, there are brighter prospects before him. The fillip given by the nation-wide awakening to the value of physical education and the need for recreational facilities, will have its repercussions in Holland too. Under the Government Scheme, an enquiry is already being conducted into the needs of the area and schemes are now in hand for the provision of new swimming baths. The problem of playing fields will unfortunately always remain an acute one, yet even so, it is remarkable what enthusiasm and an awakened public interest will do in such matters. With regard to boys' and girls' organisations, youth clubs, societies and so on, only when the Fen people themselves awaken to a sense of social obligation can much improvement be hoped for. The scattered nature of the population, too, will remain a disintegrating factor, though the extension of bus services may do something to mitigate this.

In conclusion, the future environment of the Fen child is likely to be much more conducive to a richer mental life, a better organised village community, and a higher standard

of health. It is patent that the whole area has been neglected in the past, in every direction which makes for complete living, and its full effects are seen in the children, in their slowness of thought, their narrowness of outlook, their limited interests and range of ideas. The next few years should witness great changes, whose influence will, in the long run, result in a far richer community life and a more responsive, more adaptable, and more intellectually awake child, than the type we know to-day.

APPENDIX "A"

AGRICULTURAL WAGES ACT, 1924. (LINCS.) HOLLAND.

The wages payable for the employment of male workers shall not be less than the following minimum rates:-

Years of age	Per week s. d.
21 and over	37. 6
20 and under 21	32. 0
19 " " 20	30. 6
18 " " 19	25. 6
17 " " 18	21. 6
16 " " 17	18. 6
15 " " 16	15. 6
14 " " 15	12. 0
Under 14	10. 0

Summer 50 hour week.
Winter 48 hour week

Female workers

Years of age	Per hour
15 and over	6d.
Under 15	4d.

APPENDIX "B"

STAFFING

Statistics showing for the area of Holland

(1) The number of full-time Teachers, by grade and sex, employed on 31st March, 1935.

(2) The number of Teachers of each grade and of Departments, per 1,000 pupils in average attendance.

No. of Teachers on 31st March, 1935, by Grade

Certificated	(a) Men	85	Uncertificated	(a) Men	7
	(b) Women	81		(b) Women	121
	(c) Total	166		(c) Total	128

Special Subjects (other tham Certificated)

(a) Men	-
(b) Women	6
(c) Total	6

Employed under Schedule II of the Code

Handicraft (Men)	-
Supplementary (Women)	30

Teachers per 1,000 pupils in Average Attendance

Certificated	16.9
Uncertificated	13.1
Special Subjects and Schedule II Handicraft	0.6
Supplementary	3.1
Total	33.7

APPENDIX "B" (contd.)

SCHOOL BUILDINGS

The only information available with regard to the number of rooms in Holland Elementary Schools is set out below, being an extract from a Board of Education return showing for the area of each Local Authority the number of rooms in Public Elementary Schools containing two, three, four or more classes on 21st May, 1924.

It must be pointed out that the Report of the Holland School Medical Officer for 1937 gives the number of School Departments as now 86, and the number of children on the books (31st December, 1937) as 10,420.

Total number of Departments	96
Total number of Classes	359
Total number of Pupils	11,307
Rooms containing: (a) Two Classes	82
(b) Three Classes	2
(c) Four Classes	-
Departments having romms containing two or more Classes	66
Percentage to total number of Departments	68.8
Percentage to total number of Classes ...	47.4

APPENDIX "C"

MOULTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The writer found conditions at Moulton Grammar School (95 boys) very similar to those at Donington Grammar School, apart from certain differences due to the proximity of Moulton to Holbeach, a small town of 6,111 inhabitants. This has meant a greater proportion of children of trades and professional people, and a greater proportion of pupils obtaining School Certificate and taking up non-agricultural occupations.

APPENDIX "D"

HOUSING

The energies of Rural District Councils are at present being concentrated on the erection of houses to replace dwellings found to be unfit for human habitation under the Housing Act (1930), and in reconditioning existing cottages under the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts.

Financial assistance from the Exchequer available for these purposes is as follows:-

(a) A substantial Exchequer subsidy, which is conditional on a contribution from the rates, is available in respect of new houses built by the Rural District Council to replace unfit property.

(b) A subsidy is available for houses built to relieve overcrowding among the agricultural population.

(c) Grants made to cottage owners by the local authority under the Housing (Rural Workers) Acts may at the discretion of the authority amount to two-thirds of the estimated cost of the works of improvement, subject to a maximum grant of £100 a house.

APPENDIX "E"

NOTES ON SMALLHOLDING IN HOLLAND

The Fenland, owing to its historical origin, has always had a large number of Freeholders. The alienation and distribution of monastic lands, and the sale of lands by the Adventurers who reclaimed the Fens in the seventeenth century, precluded the possibility of the land being dominated by any large territorial owners. During the prosperous times between 1860 and 1875, large plots of land came into the market and a very large number of small freeholds was then created. In recent years, under the Small Holdings Act, the County Council has bought land, and to-day it is impossible to cope with the long waiting list for a smallholding.

APPENDIX "F"

NOTE ON INTERMARRIAGE

The writer is fully convinced that intermarriage has definitely retarded the improvement of the rural population in this area, but the subject is so complex and generalisations are so dangerous, that the influence of this factor on the physical and mental capacities of the children has not been dealt with. In the writer's own opinion.the prevalence of inbreeding in Holland is due to the following factors.

(1) The scattered nature of the population.

(2) The richness of the land, which induces farmers to remain in the area and so precludes the influx of any new blood.

(3) Labourers to not move from farm to farm, as is the case in other areas, e.g. Northumberland.

(4) Holland is cut off from the main lines of communication.

To base any proposition on statistical evidence is, however, no easy matter. As for mental deficiency, there is the following analysis[1] made in 1937:

---

1. Report of School Medical Officer, 1937, p.29.

APPENDIX "F" (contd.)

At Certified Schools	At Public Elementary Schools	At no School or Institution	Total
1	70	3	74

Unfortunately, no figures are published with regard to mentally retarded children, and until such information is available it is impossible to draw any hard and fast conclusions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

HISTORICAL

A Short History of Lincolnshire	Chas. Brears	A. Brown & Sons
History of the Fens	W. H. Wheeler	
Lincolnshire Notes and Queries		Lincoln Public Library
Lincolnshire Fens and Fen-Dwellers	John Hackford	Lincoln Public Library
The English Peasantry at Home	Chas. Whymper	Lincoln Public Library
The Fen Country	A. S. Ruston	Lincoln Public Library
Handbook to the Fenland	S. H. Miller	
The Fenland - Past and Present	Miller and Skertchley	

GENERAL

The Country School	M. K. Ashby	Oxford University Press
Rural Education	Ashby and Byles	Oxford University Press
Change in the Village	G. Bourne	Duckworth

PUBLICATIONS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Rural Education, No.46.

Education and the Countryside, No.99.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (contd.)

An Experiment in Rural Re-organisation, No.93.

The Practical Management of Small Livestock, No.38.

A Rural Special Subjects Centre, No.31.

The Problem of Rural Schools and Teachers in N. America, No.13.

The Experiment in Rural Secondary Education conducted at Knaresborough, No.29.

The Teaching of Gardening.

Books in Public Elementary Schools.

The Spens Report.

PUBLICATIONS OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

The Drage Report, Vols. I and II.

The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life.

Young Farmers' Clubs. Leaflet No.103.

OTHER GENERAL PAMPHLETS, ETC.

Vocational Education in Agriculture. Studies and Reports. Series K. No.9.	International Labour Office
Report on the Organisation of Systematic Courses of Instruction, 1935.	Agricultural Education Association
Suggested Syllabus of Rural Education.	Herefordshire County Council
The Sociological Background of Adult Education in Rural Districts.	A. W. Ashby. British Inst. of Adult Educ.

OTHER GENERAL PAMPHLETS, ETC. (contd.)

Handbook, 1937-1938.	National Federation of Women's Institutes
Public Questions.	National Federation of Women's Institutes
Rural Housing, 1937.	Ministry of Health
Rural Housing.	Central Housing Advisory Committee

PUBLICATIONS ON LOCAL CONDITIONS

The Land of Britain. Lincolnshire. (Parts of Holland).	Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain
The Relation between Health and Intelligence in School Children.	N. T. England. The Journal of Hygiene, Vol.36, No.1.
Annual Report on the County Health Services, Parts I and II, 1933 and 1937.	Holland County Council
Prospectus of Evening Classes.	Holland Education Committee

STATISTICS, PERIODICALS, ETC.

Elementary Schools. Return showing on the 21st of May, 1924, the number of rooms used for teaching containing two or more classes.	Board of Education
Public Elementary Schools in England and Wales.	List 46. Board of Education
Size of Classes in Public Elementary Schools.	List 44. Board of Education

STATISTICS, PERIODICALS, ETC. (contd.)

Agricultural Statistics, 1937, Part I.	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Agricultural Wages Act, 1924, (Holland).	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
The Times Educational Supplement, February 19th, 1938.	